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from

Alice M. Tompkins

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A CHILD OF THE REVOLUTION.

Penet

from

Alice M. Tompkins

Christmas 1886.

[ROBERTS Margaret]

1st Edn

615

A CHILD OF THE REVOLUTION.



Come, never say I have not good ideas."—PAGE 18.

M. Roberts

A

CHILD OF THE REVOLUTION.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"THE ATELIER DU LYS," "MADEMOISELLE MORI," "IN THE OLDEN TIME,"

"WOMEN OF THE LAST DAYS OF OLD FRANCE," ETC. ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY C. J. STANILAND, R.I.

LONDON:

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1886.

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HATCHARDS, PICCADILLY, LONDON.

A CHILD OF THE REVOLUTION.

CHAPTER I.

EVIL days had fallen on France, where the storm of such a revolution as Europe had never seen since Rome fell before the barbarians was raging in unchecked fury, and those who had rejoiced the most in the dawn of freedom in 1789 now sat aghast and confounded. Throughout the land the prisons were overflowing, not only with the noblesse, but with people of all ranks, down to the very poorest, and of all ages, from the octogenarian down to the baby born in captivity. There was death in the spite of a neighbour, or the greed of some one eager to gain the reward offered for denouncing an aristocrat, or some one guilty of want of patriotism, or too rich, or too influential, or anything else which attracted attention. Terror had paralysed the whole country, and the attempts of the *émigrés* to gather an army and return to put down the Jacobins, who were masters of Paris, and therefore of all France, were

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so feeble and ineffectual, and awoke such odium and contempt, that they were fatal to their cause.

One town alone had made a brave stand against the barbarous cruelties which the rest tamely submitted to. The stately city of Lyons had rallied all the wise and moderate citizens they could muster, had subdued the "reds" within her walls, and for a while breathed freely. But soon Paris preached "liberty, equality, and fraternity" by sending an army against her, eagerly hailed by the defeated party in the town, and after a gallant defence the unhappy city had found herself forced to yield, and had met the worst that such rulers as the Jacobins of Paris could do to punish her resistance.

By the end of 1793 there was mourning throughout Lyons. Hardly one household had escaped ruinous fines and confiscation, even if some of its members had not fallen under the axe of the guillotine, which stood in the Place Bellecour, always ready to receive the *levées* of prisoners daily brought there. Wholesale executions took place in Les Brotteaux, where files of victims stood to be shot, and were buried where they fell; and still arrests went on. Numbers of families were ordered to remain under surveillance, imprisoned in their own houses, with a guard whom they had to maintain, and were trembling not only for their own lives, but lest fugitives dear to them should rashly return, impelled into the jaws of death by the longing to know how their relations were faring. Even sadder was the deep dissension, the sharp discord, brought into

households until now united and loving by the difference of political opinions. Fathers and sons, husbands and wives, took opposite sides,—some enthusiastic for reform and a republic, others clinging passionately to the losing side, all the more that it *was* the losing one, and that generosity, chivalry, tradition forbade them to forsake it. The shadow of death lay on the city, and perhaps even the fiercest republican now and then inwardly quaked, and wondered if his turn would not one day come. The very air seemed full of tears and terror, though the timid feigned satisfaction, and the bravest only ventured to keep a gloomy silence, since to betray sadness or discontent was held to denote a want of patriotism deserving death. Every one had to speak, write, and act as if there were a thousand unfriendly witnesses; and to add to all other troubles there was a total stagnation of trade, which brought the town to the verge of starvation, and roused the labouring and artisan population to fury. Flour was so scarce that it could no longer be bought, nor would the municipal government allow bread to be made at home; every citizen had to apply for an order so many times a week, by which it could be procured from certain bakers, who were authorised to sell it in fixed rations.

But amid the general gloom and mourning of the greater number of the Lyonnais, and the savage exultation and license of the rest, individual joys or sorrows made themselves just as keenly felt as in the most peaceful times, and to Geneviève Vaudès, weeping

in her solitary lodging over her baby's death, other people's troubles seemed far off and small.

She grieved for it with a passion of regret, this babe of a month old, which its father had never seen, as she sat alone in her humble room in one of the foul and narrow streets which intersected each other in one of the poorer quarters of Lyons. An old neighbour had come in to console her with vain, well-meant talk, to which Geneviève hardly listened. The child had been buried that morning, and now her anguish poured itself out to this ear, heedless of what Mère Allard said in return.

"If he only had seen it!" she moaned, rocking herself backwards and forwards, "or if he only knew it was dead! But he will come home expecting to find it, and he longed so for it, my poor Jacques. He almost broke his heart when he came home—came out of prison, you know—after our troubles, and found little Maurice had died in his absence. How shall I tell him! how shall I tell him!"

"Ay, you lost the boy while Vaudès was in trouble—so you did."

"Yes, yes, he died, my little Maurice; and Vaudès always believed it was because while he was imprisoned we were so poor, and could not get proper food or medicine, nor nurse him as he should have been nursed. How could I, when all we had to live on was the little I could earn? It drove Vaudès mad, I think; and you know, Mère Allard, it surely was hard measure to put a

man in prison only for just hawking books about, though I know it was wrong, very wrong, to sell books which the clergy did not approve; Père Thomas told me so. But to shut him up for two years, and get the little lad and me driven out of our home—ah, the Bishop was a hard man, and the Prior too; many others know that. And then to come back here thinking my father would give me a home, and to find him just dead, and no one to turn to!—you know what mother always was when one had thwarted her. And the boy died too. Ah, if you had only seen what a rosy angel he was till our troubles came! And I had to tell Jacques when he came back and asked for his little lad; and now the baby!” she cried, with short, broken sobs. “Père Thomas was very kind when he heard about me; but it was too late, too late; the child died, and Père Thomas told me it was a judgment on Vaudès. And now, you see, this one goes too. But Vaudès always thinks all our troubles come through the nobles and the clergy; he hated them always, you know, but after that—ah, my God, he talks of patriotism, and brotherhood, but I think he never forgets that he vowed to have his revenge upon the priests and the nobles, and that it is that which has spurred him on, and made him do what he has.”

“Well, he has got his revenge then,” said Mère Allard, with a short laugh in which there was no mirth.

“He has, he has, God help us! There has not been

a château burned or a church sacked for miles round but he was there like one at a feast; not a measure voted in the town against the aristocrats but he has urged it on. He is Barré's right hand, you know."

"Well, if birds of a feather——"

"No, no, Vaudès is not a cruel man, nor an irreligious man by nature, nor a renegade like Barré; you need not think that, Mère Allard. He loves me and is good to me, though we think so differently, and that is hard between husband and wife. He has had his heart turned against the nobles and priests; his own troubles and those of others have made him mad, but he loves me well, neighbour, you know that."

She looked appealingly up, as if imploring confirmation of what in her heart she doubted, and Mère Allard pursed up her lips significantly.

"But the worst of it is he has no respect for the Church, and says such dreadful things about the Holy Father and the priests. What is the use of saying he is not an atheist when he does that?" Geneviève went on. "It is all one, and it breaks my heart."

She wept passionately, and Mère Allard grew a little impatient of grief which would not be soothed by her.

"These are evil times for more than you, my poor girl," she said, with a touch of reproof. "What days we have seen! Shall I ever forget the mob besieging Pierre Cise, and Mademoiselle Félicité! Ah, there is a brave girl for you! Standing out alone before that mad crowd, and bidding the mayor protect the prisoners!

She risked her life a hundred times that day to try to save them, while the poor old governor, her father, was shaking and moaning in some corner, and she will carry the wounds she got that day to her grave, the noble girl."

"Ah, Vaudès did his best to save her; he does not love massacres of prisoners," said Geneviève, with mingled horror and thankfulness as she recollected that awful day, when the furious multitude attacked the state prison, and drenched it with the blood of the unhappy captives. "But who knows where she is now? a fugitive, and her old father and mother under arrest in the house they fled to, and her sister, good Madame Milanes, in prison. But my husband would have saved those poor murdered prisoners in Pierre Cise. He did get some women taken away to Les Récluses unhurt. He got them spared."

"Ay, for the guillotine. Spared to-day to die to-morrow. As you say, he hates the aristocrats like poison, and the clergy too, except Challier, to be sure. It is lucky Vaudès did not come to the same end as his friends."

"How can you say such things!" exclaimed Geneviève, with shuddering anger, as she heard this allusion to the ex-abbé Challier, who had become one of the most infamous among the Jacobins, and had himself been guillotined by the party of order during the brief interval when they had had the upper hand.

"Well, is it not true? And after all, why should we stand up for the nobles, who never lifted a finger to

help us, and left us poor folk to pay the taxes; and now they are all gone out of the country, or want to go, and trade is at a stand-still, and we are starving. All our misfortunes are due to them, the egotists."

"Would you have them stay to be guillotined?"

"As for that I do not know; but it is said they take millions of money out of the country, and that is not just. It is French money, and ought to be spent in France. You see how poor we are all getting. The aristocrats have no heart for any one but themselves. Formerly all the money we worked ourselves to death to earn went to pay for the Queen's *fêtes* and the King's hunting parties, and in pensions to the nobles on the Red Book; and now they are all trying to get away and hire a foreign army to bring back the old ways—the *corvée* and *gabelle* and all the rest. And who is left to buy anything, I ask you? That is what my cousin Anacharsis Chaumel was saying this morning. His shop used to make a good living by painting coats-of-arms on the carriages of the nobles; but now there is no work, and he is turned off, and how he and his family are to live nobody knows. And there are dozens in a like plight."

"But since no one is allowed to have coats-of-arms any longer, what can the nobles do?" answered Geneviève wearily. "And even if they might, how should they get horses to draw their coaches? The horses have all been requisitioned for the army."

"All our troubles come through these *ci-devants*,"

persisted Mère Allard ; " that is certain. They harm us whether they go or stay, and they deserve all they have got, and yet, *ma foi*, sometimes I am sorry for them. What is that ? "

She started up and ran to the window, as the heavy tramp of feet and roar of men's voices singing the already famous Marseillaise hymn came to her ear. Evidently something unusual was happening, and, since it could hardly affect her personally, this was not unwelcome. The days were dull without some new excitement. There had been so many startling events in the last months to rouse and stir the populace that they felt discontented and ill-used if something fresh did not constantly happen. Although Lyons was comparatively *blasé* as to such occurrences, still the arrest of some notable person or the arrival of some celebrated demagogue would always speedily collect a crowd, and the quarters of La Croix Rousse, where the *canuts* or silk-weavers lived, always a hot-bed of insurrection, never failed to pour forth its fierce population on the slightest hint of any stir in the city.

The throng now passing through the narrow street into which the house of Vaudès looked was chiefly composed of men wearing only sabots and trousers, with a coarse shirt, usually red ; but among them were mingled a number of wild-looking, exultant women, pressing with shrill cries and jeers round a little knot of dusty, travel-worn officers, who with hands tied, and stern set faces, marched amid a regiment of their own

soldiers, by whom they had been seized and arrested. They formed the centre of this regiment, on the outskirts of which the mob pressed, applauding the soldiers, and shouting coarse taunts at the prisoners.

"Look at that!" said Mère Allard to Geneviève, who had come to her side, and was looking pityingly at them. "Well, how times are changed! A couple of years ago we should all have had to curtsy and bow to those gentry, and beg their pardon for getting in the way if they condescended to run over us, and now we are the masters and they have to go underneath."

"I do not know that," murmured Geneviève, as she noted the contemptuous dignity with which the captives ignored the insults showered upon them.

"You are a bit of an aristocrat yourself now-a-days, my girl," said Mère Allard, returning to her seat and beginning to eat the dinner which she had brought with her, a mixture of black bread and rancid cheese, compounded together with brandy. "You had best look out. I am not going to betray you, for I know how to keep my mouth shut, and I knew your father and mother—and you too, before you were old enough to run alone; but there are some who would not stop for that, as I need not tell you, and Vaudès has his enemies too. It would be no laughing matter for him if it got about that his wife was of another way of thinking to himself. How does he take it, eh?"

"It—it—comes between us," said Geneviève, in a low sobbing voice.

"Ay, so I expected. A man does not like it when his own wife holds with his enemies, or those he thinks his enemies."

"He feels it so hard that I do not see things through his eyes, as I used before I knew Père Thomas, and he cannot understand what my religion is to me. Where should I have been without it by this time? What would have been the end of me in my troubles if I had not had that to keep me straight? I have had my temptations, as you know, while I was so poor and friendless, no husband to protect me, and young too."

"And pretty," said Mère Allard, shaking her head as she looked at the pale, worn face. "Yes, when you married you were as pretty a girl as any in Lyons."

"There is no saying what I owe Père Thomas; and how can I feel as Jacques does? All this murdering of people just because they have a *De* to their names, or because they are in some one's way, for it is just that, you know, Mère Allard; and the driving away of the clergy, and closing the churches, and forbidding the very name of God and the Holy Virgin,—it is an awful sin. I dream of it at night, and it weighs on me all day. And that Vaudès should have a share in it, and rejoice in it! I feel as if there were blood on my own hands. And he knows what I think, I cannot keep it from him; and then he argues, and is so grieved and angry that it breaks my heart."

"He has never lifted his hand to you, girl?"

"No, no; he is always kind. But at first he used to

try to make me think as he does, and when I tried to answer he would say, 'Go! you learned that from your priest. And after a time he seemed not to care to talk to me any more, and now he keeps what he is thinking and planning to himself, and that is worse, I think. And there is no one to speak a word of comfort, nor confess to, nor a church where one can go and pray, no, nor so much liberty—and these people are always talking of liberty!—as to have a bit of blessed box in one's house, or a crucifix in one's bed-room; and if one's child dies it is taken away and buried like a dog, without a word of prayer."

She covered her face and sobbed. That her baby had been carried to unconsecrated ground, with no holy words spoken over it, had trebled the bitterness of this bitter loss to the poor mother.

"Well, I miss the bells and the Fête Dieu too," said Mère Allard, offering some of her uninviting dinner to Geneviève while she spoke. "What, you won't have any? Tut! tut! how is one to live without eating? Your husband will not love you the better for looking like a ghost, you may be sure. Don't give him the chance of thinking every woman prettier and gayer than his own wife, little fool. Well, if you wont— What was I saying? Oh yes, I miss the bells and the rest of it too, and Frère Simplex, with his big red ears and his jolly face and his wallet, coming round for scraps and joking with us; and I so wish your poor little cabbage had been baptized."

"My baby was baptized," answered Geneviève hastily. "Père Thomas told me the last time I saw him that if I had a child, and there were no priest to be found, I might sprinkle it myself. The Church allows such baptism in case of need, he said; and I did it. My little darling was a Christian, even if she was buried like a heathen."

"Ah, that is well," said Mère Allard. "I am not one who holds, like you, to everything a priest says; but to know that the poor little thing's soul was wandering about as a will-of-the-wisp or an ermine would be a hard thing on her and you too, my girl. I have always held to baptizing children as soon as possible ever since Marie Dumont lost hers unchristened. I knew Marie well as a girl when I lived in the country, and many a time she saw its soul dancing on the marsh near her cottage. How she used to cry about it, to be sure! She was an unlucky woman, Marie Dumont; her husband was drowned, and she saw him with her own eyes on St. Medard's night."

"Saw his spirit?"

"Saw his spirit. She told me herself how she was out late that evening the year he was drowned, and never once recollected what anniversary it was, and as she came up to the river bank there were all the souls which had been drowned that year in the Rhône walking in procession, each carrying a lighted taper, coming back to seek the good works they had done in their lifetime; because for those who have good works to show St. Peter at the gate of Paradise he turns the key,

but those who have none to show are sent back to Purgatory, or a worse place still, carrying their bad actions with them," said Mère Allard, who, though she rather prided herself on believing less than her neighbours, had implicit faith in the superstitions she had learned in her childhood.

"Ah!" said Geneviève, with a shudder. "And if one were to die now there would be no masses said, no last sacraments, no absolution, no priest. What would become of us and of those we love?" She was thinking of her husband.

"You see, *ma bonne*, there are worse things to bear than a baby's death. The little thing is safe enough in Paradise, no doubt; and as for you, my girl, as I said just now, you must keep well and not fret like this, for you see it will not do to die when there are no priests and no masses, eh? I suppose we shall have them back some day though, whatever people may say. This sort of upset cannot go on, and priests are like couch-grass, uncommon hard to root out; and though no doubt they are a pest, somehow it does not seem natural without them. The curés were not a bad lot mostly, whatever the bishops and all the great ones might be. I don't care how much the convents and abbeys are cleared out, but men like our own curé, yes, and your Père Thomas, should have been let alone, to my thinking. But do not tell any one I said so," she added, in hasty alarm. "Less than that has sent many to look out of the little window."

To look out of the little window meant in popular parlance to be guillotined.

"No, I shall not say anything about it, and besides, no one comes near me but you. I know hardly any one round here, and old acquaintances never come."

"I dare say not. We are all afraid of one another now-a-days, and nobody knows what will happen from one day to another. It is dull enough now the siege is over. While that went on we had a lively time, with the cannon roaring, and one house on fire here and another there, or a building knocked to pieces, and a rush to see what it was, or the soldiers marching through the streets and trumpets blowing. But that is over now, and we have had a bad time of it since then."

"We have," answered Geneviève, from her heart.

"One would think the executions must come to an end," pursued Mère Allard, "what with the guillotine, and the numbers marched out every day to be shot in Les Brotteaux; but there are always more and more. Why, people hardly look up now when the death-carts go by, they are so used to it, though, to be sure, there are some like my sister-in-law, La Huettes; nothing will keep her at home at the hour when the executions take place. Formerly at such times my brother used to shut her up and beat her; but, bah! she would be off through the window. Judge what she is now, neither to have nor to hold; and he dares not hinder her, lest she should denounce him for want of patriotism. When she comes in and tells me all about it, I dissemble and

pretend to listen with pleasure, but the truth is it gives me goose-flesh all over me."

She did not see that the subject was equally repulsive to Geneviève.

"La Huette was delighted this morning," she went on; "five nuns and a priest to be guillotined. The abbess ascended the scaffold first, and the priest blessed them all, and they went up one after the other as calmly as if to sing vespers. The youngest, a little novice, was kept last of all to see if she would flinch after watching the death of the others, but she only stood still and prayed with her eyes on the priest, and then stepped up like the other four. La Huette was sadly put out at that, and because some one in the crowd pitied them. But you do not listen."

"They are better off than those left alive," said Geneviève, with a deep sigh. "Life is too hard."

"Come, come, that is nonsense. You talk as if no one had ever lost a child but you."

"I have lost ten times more than my child," said Geneviève, the bitterness of her heart overflowing. "I have lost the chance that my husband might love me as he used. He has slipped away from me; he cares only for these detestable politics; I am nothing to him, worse than nothing! I—I think sometimes he will divorce me," she added under her breath, with a wild look in her eyes, "and I could not live if he did. My husband, for whom I gave up everything, he is all I have—whom I love better than my life! I struggled

on all the time he was in prison, I do not know how, and I thought I should have died of joy when he came back; and then to find him drift away from me, hear him talk as if this awful time were like God's own kingdom come—I wish I were dead and buried!”

“That is not the way to make things go better. But it is a pity the baby died; I saw how he had set his heart upon its coming. Yes, 'tis a pity! And to think how thankful some mothers would be to know their little ones safe in the grave! There was a poor young thing, one of those very women whom Vaudès got transferred before the massacre to Les Récluses, so she was—well, she died of jail fever two days ago, and left a child not four weeks old behind her.”

“Four weeks old! Like my little one.”

“Yes, just that age. I heard all about it from La Michaude, the head jailer's wife. I am making her a gown, and I went up to the prison to get the stuff from her, and she told me. And another lady who was guillotined two months ago left her child of five years old to the care of the ladies in prison, and they have all been changed three times since then, and now among the whole lot there is not one who knows anything about her. Bless you, there are plenty of children in the jails. I heard of one not four years old, an English one they say, with her nurse; and why they put her there no one knows, for neither the child nor the nurse can speak a word of French; I expect that was why they have been arrested.”

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Geneviève was not attending. "The little baby at Les Récluses—what will become of it?" she asked.

"Oh, well, it must be sent to the Maternity House, I suppose."

"There! The children die there like flies, they say."

"So they do; what would you have? Children want mothering; they cannot thrive in that sort of place."

"A baby of four weeks' old! poor little angel! Who was the mother?"

Geneviève was roused at last out of her own troubles.

"I did not ask. It does not do to ask questions as if one took an interest in prisoners. La Michaude seemed really sorry about it, and said if her man would have let her she would have brought it up, but he would not hear of it. He is not a bad sort of fellow, Michaud, but he is not one to burden himself with other folk's children. Why should he?"

"Ah, the poor young mother! to leave her little one like that! She must have longed and prayed to take it with her."

"Sure enough it is a hard world to leave an orphan in. Why, look here, Geneviève, girl, it would be a good deed if you took it. You might bring it up like your own,—why not? And since you take your man's dealings with the aristocrats so much to heart, it would be something to set on the other side, you see. Why not? Come, never say I have not good ideas."

Geneviève shook her head with a sad smile.

"Do you think my husband would let me? It would only make him feel his own child's death more if he saw another woman's in my arms—and an aristocrat's."

"I don't know that. And why should he ever know it?" urged Mère Allard, becoming eager as her plan developed itself to her. "You say a child would bring you together, and that you are afraid because you have none he may divorce you; and one does hear of divorces on all sides now since the new law has passed; incompatibility of temper is as common as blackberries, you see—and he need never know."

"What are you dreaming of, neighbour?"

"Who is there to tell him?" Mère Allard was one of those people whom opposition makes doubly tenacious. "Not half a dozen people know that you had a child at all, and fewer still that you have lost it. I am not one to let it out, you may be sure; and you are going away as soon as Vaudès comes back from Paris, are you not?"

"Yes, at once; but the municipality sent him and two others to Paris to report on—on what has been done since the siege. We ought to have gone before, but he said public business must come before private; and then I was not fit to travel; but we shall go to Valentré as soon as possible."

"Is it true that Vaudès has come into property there?"

"Who says so?" asked Geneviève, in a tone of alarm.

"Do not fear, *ma petite*; I know well enough that it

is dangerous to be suspected of owning anything now-a-days. You may speak safely to Madelon Allard."

"His old great-uncle at Valentré is dead. He was thought to be very poor, but it seems he was a miser, and all he had comes to my husband."

"Well, that is a good thing, for as far as I see Vaudès has not gained much by all these changes. A good many have made their fortunes," said Mère Allard, regretfully. "You may be sure that half those who are so hot for the Revolution would never have lifted a finger but for the sale of church lands. Hu! how they fired up when they heard of that, and cried 'Vive la Revolution!' and hustled off to the municipality with all the money they could muster to buy a bit of land. It is a grand thing to own an acre or two of one's own. If my man and I could ever have saved a few pounds we should have had a grand chance three years ago, but we never had a liard to spare, not we; and I don't suppose, by what I see, you have made much by the upset."

"I have not known how to find bread to eat," said Geneviève, with irrepressible bitterness.

"Just so, that is the way, while our men run about making speeches at the clubs and read the news to the people," said Mère Allard, uttering the unspoken thought in Geneviève's mind, while she gave an indignant little push to *Les Annales Patriotiques*, which lay, much read and crumpled, on the table near her. "My husband cannot read, thank the saints, but he's off to

hear yours and Cassine Pourcheand and Cantal the cobbler whenever these vile papers come. I hate the sight of them, I do! And there they all sit in their *salle*, with a big smoky lantern overhead, and our fat mayor, with his tricolour scarf, and all the rest of them, one shouting and squabbling louder than another. To be sure it is a pleasure to say just what one likes, when one recollects that three years ago we should have been hanged for it; but still I see no good in changes that do not make poor people richer. And so you are going to Valentré? And what has the old man left behind him?"

"I hardly know. Jacques did not tell me much, his head was full of other things; but his uncle kept an old curiosity shop. He had a house or part of one in the town, and it seems that a little farm and a vineyard belonged to him, though he let no one know it."

"And all that comes to Vaudès? My word, but he is in luck! If your parents could have known he would inherit all this they would not have set their faces against your marrying him as they did."

Geneviève sighed. She could never remember without a pang of remorse how she had defied the opposition made by her family to her marrying the young colporteur, who came to Lyons and won her heart. She had been a wilful daughter she knew, and perhaps, as she would think, this was why her married life had been so full of troubles.

"For my part I never could guess what you saw in

him," pursued Mère Allard, "with his thin face as dark as a Moor's, and those black eyes like live coals; but girls see through other spectacles than their elders, and he was resolved to have you, and you him, for all any one could say or do. Ah! well, well. And when does he come back?"

"I do not know. He may be called back directly, since it is said they have discovered a plot against the nation here."

"Ah, bah! I am tired of hearing of plots. It is just an excuse for confiscations and imprisonments. As soon as we get a little dull the *canuts* begin to grumble, and then it is necessary to amuse them. Some day there will be nothing left to confiscate and no one to execute, and what will happen then, I ask you? Not that I want the *ci-devants* back; if they returned they would want their lands again, and there would be a *Terreur Blanche*," said Mère Allard, with unconscious prophecy. "Maybe for a while they would be afraid and behave themselves, but then they would begin again, and so should we. It would be a bad day for Vaudès and his friends if the nobles and clergy came back, *hein?* Does he ever think of that?"

"I never speak of such a thing. He would fall ill of anger only to hear it named."

"Ah, ah, he is like them all; he talks of the country and the nation, and denounces every one, king and queen when we had them, nobles, ecclesiastics, procureurs, fermiers généraux, and all the rest, but at

bottom he only wants to pay off his own old grudges," said Mère Allard, doing Vaudès, however, less than justice, as Geneviève knew.

"That is not true, neighbour," she said, with a faint colour coming to her wan, thin cheeks.

When thus animated her countenance recalled what she had been when she first married, and Mère Allard exclaimed, "Why, you look as you did six years ago, when you were the prettiest girl in our quarter, and half a dozen men wanted to marry you. But nothing would serve you but Vaudès; he bewitched you, I think. You have paid for your wilfulness since, poor lass. Why, if you had taken Luc the baker, or Jean Renart, who is a rich man now-a-days—"

"I have never wished I had married any one but Vaudès," said Geneviève, flushing more deeply. "If it were all to do over again I'd do the same."

"Well," said Mère Allard, holding up her hands and contemplating her curiously, "if that is so—"

"Yes, it is," answered Geneviève, steadily, and her old friend was forced to believe her, though she was quite unable to comprehend the passionate love which had enabled a clinging, timid girl to withstand and vanquish the reproaches and opposition of her whole family, and go through the trials which had followed her marriage, without once wishing it undone. She sat and looked at her with an odd smile.

"All the better," she said; "but it is not everything that a woman should love her husband; it matters

much more that he should love her, if there must be love at all. For my part I do not see the need of it; I married my Antoine because he came and asked for me, and my father told me it was settled. Antoine wanted a wife to keep his house, and I did not dislike him; he has been a good husband enough, and hardly ever beat me, even when things put him out, and girls now may think themselves lucky if they get one like him; for whether things are going to be better or worse, I see very well that young men will not be what their fathers were."

"I suppose not," Geneviève answered in her weary tone.

"No, that is certain. They used to be quite satisfied to drink *tisane à la réglisse*, which cost only a liard, while now they must have wine at three times the price. They drink, and idle, and play cards, and shout their *politicailleries*. Yes, yes, my old Antoine is worth a hundred of them. But you would not have put up with one like him," said Mère Allard, with a certain odd tone of contemptuous pity, as she turned her wrinkled face and eyes still bright, and with a spark of mockery in them, on the younger woman.

"No," said Geneviève, absently.

It sounded too impossible in her ears to be worth a protest. She could no more have put up with a dullard like Antoine, even in his best days, than Mère Allard could comprehend the tumult and distraction of feeling which racked her heart.

"But anyhow my husband would never think of divorcing me," said Mère Allard, perhaps a little piqued. "I'd like to catch him at it."

"Who was talking of divorce?" asked Geneviève, with a scared look.

"Why, you yourself were speaking of it just now."

"It is a wicked thing, a great sin," answered Geneviève, vehemently. "No one can put asunder what the Church has joined together. Père Thomas said so."

"Anyhow I expect it is just a sick fancy that Vaudès, whatever he may be, would put away his wife when she gave up so much for him. He is not that sort of man."

"No, no; but when he comes back and finds his baby dead—"

"Now, now, do not go back on that. It is his blame, and no fault of yours. A man ought not to leave his wife at such a time when she begs and prays him to stay with her, as I know you did. Don't talk to me of public affairs and the country in danger; what's all that to a married man?" said Mère Allard, with true feminine indignation. "He left you to fret, and how could the child prosper? Tell him so if he casts it up to you."

Geneviève gave a wan smile. She knew, though she was not strong enough to keep her troubles to herself, how little Mère Allard could enter into them. It was not reproach from her husband that she feared, nor was it even mother's love which made her lament her baby

as she did; she grieved over his disappointment, and the loss of what would have been so strong a tie between them that she hoped it would make the difference of their opinions forgotten, and draw them together again as in earlier days.

"If you think any more about the child," began Mère Allard, as she rose to go.

"What child?"

"The one I told you of at Les Récluses. It would be a good deed to take it, as I said before."

"He would not let me; and as for not telling him, you do not suppose I could pass it off as my own? Why, do you imagine I ever would do such a thing? and deceive him too about his own child! How could you ever speak of such a thing?"

"Well, anyhow I would take it; you can think it over. I'll answer for it Père Thomas would say it was a right thing to do, and it would make up a bit for some of Vaùdès' doings. If you took the child he could hardly send it away, and if he did, at the worst it could go to the Maternité. I'd have a look at it anyhow."

"It is not so easy to get admittance to the prisons."

"No, not when one wants to come out again."

"And if I wanted to do it, I could not go to the municipality and ask for a permit. What excuse could I make?" said Geneviève, anxious to prove the thing impossible, for it was always disagreeable and difficult to her to resist when urged, especially if a thing were

put before her as a duty. The shrewd ear of Mère Allard detected a sound of wavering in the way in which she spoke.

"No need for a permit at all. You can carry the gown I am making to La Michaude, in her own part of the prison, and ask any questions you choose."

"I should like just to see the poor little thing."

"Well, then, you had better lose no time, for Michaud will be packing it off. He has let her keep it till now to see if any one would claim it, but that is not likely. There would be no harm anyhow in looking at it. La Michaude says it is a little angel."

"And the mother died and had no one to leave it with! God rest her soul," said Geneviève, crossing herself and murmuring a prayer.

"Well, good-bye. If you settle to go to Les Récluses just look in to-morrow, and I will let you have the gown. Tell La Michaude you come from me, and it will be all right. Mind she pays you for it. *She* has plenty of money, whoever may want. What with all she gets for washing the prisoners' clothes, and what people slip into her hand whenever she goes out, to get messages and letters carried back, and what they give her in the prison for carrying news out to friends, I should think she drove a good trade. But one must not say so. Adieu, *ma bonne*; take my advice and get a cheerful face to meet your husband when he comes home, if you don't want him to be off again at the first opportunity. Men don't like to find their wives all

tears and trouble, and rosy cheeks keep them at home more than pale ones. Freshen up your dress and your room, my girl, and have a smile for Vaudès when he comes, that is my advice, and I know men better than you do. Since you left everything for your husband, try to keep him."

With which advice Mère Allard went home, leaving Geneviève to meditate on what she had been saying.

CHAPTER II.

GENEVÈVE sat thinking for a long while after Mère Allard left her. She was raised out of her hopeless depression, and her mind was active. Her thoughts went back to the time before she married, when her heart used to beat so fast with sympathy and excitement as she listened to Vaudès' descriptions of the dangers he ran and the adventures he met with in hawking about the books he carried in his great wicker basket—*bons paroissiens* and almanacs and catechisms on the top, and gazettes with accounts of the war then raging between England and America, and pamphlets and works by Voltaire and Rousseau and Helvetius hidden below, bitterly hostile to despotism and the ruling State Church, which to Vaudès represented intolerable tyranny, and his burning desire was to rouse the people to claim their rights—that liberty, equality, and fraternity which were now being so strangely worked out. To carry such books and papers was strictly forbidden by law, and punishable by the galleys—those terrible galleys at Toulon where so many brave and

steadfast Huguenots had sat in chains among the worst and lowest criminals.

Vaudès came of a Calvinist family in the south-west of France, but one which had bowed to the storm, and nominally became Roman Catholic, though keeping hot and unforgotten the memory of the cruel persecutions which had driven them into outward submission, and which their more steadfast brethren had endured at the price of exile or death. This descent had been remembered by the ecclesiastical authorities when Vaudès got into trouble, and no doubt it counted for much in the unflagging war which he made on the dominant Church.

Perhaps even before Huguenot days his family had been unorthodox and suffered accordingly, for the very name of Vaudès hinted at heresy, since it was one which had been given in the Middle Ages to all heretics, no matter of what sect, in that part of France to which his family belonged, and especially to the Albigenses.

However that might be, there certainly was another peculiar element in the man which had to be taken into account. The Saracens had conquered and long held the district where he was born, and had left their stamp upon both place and people. In the vineyard which Vaudès had unexpectedly inherited there was a deep Moorish well, with a great wheel and earthen jars; a hill near was named Rochemaure; many Arabic words lingered in the popular dialect, and swarthy complexions, slender limbs, and vivid dark eyes like his were too common there to attract attention, strange as they

looked to the Lyonnais, and to Geneviève's friends and family in particular.

Geneviève sat recalling all which he used to tell her of his family, himself, his longings and hopes, and the eager, unquestioning sympathy with which she had listened to it all. He had carried her out of herself and into his own life, until nothing else had any interest for her, and, deaf to remonstrance, she had left her home and followed the colporteur's uncertain fortunes, and for a while, though very poor, had been utterly happy and contented in the little home to which he took her.

But his trade and his mission, as he held it to be, necessarily took him constantly from her. She was solitary enough then, for neighbours held aloof from her both as a stranger and as the wife of a man not in good odour with the authorities, though as yet Vaudès had managed to keep out of actual trouble.

She found that old affections, old friendships began to reassert their power in her heart, and though she did not love her husband less, she longed and almost pined for her old life, her parents, her former surroundings, and discovered that she had been happier than she knew when a girl in her father's house in Lyons.

The birth of a boy made both her and Vaudès very happy. He was passionately fond of children, and all the tenderness in his nature flowed out towards them, but to Geneviève not even her own child was nearly as precious as her husband. To Vaudès his little son was closer and dearer than even his wife. He was at

home for a while after its birth, collecting a new store of books before he started on a fresh tour round the country, and Geneviève forgot her home-sickness and her fears for him, and wanted nothing more than she possessed, and the next year was prosperous, but that was the end of happiness or prosperity in their house. The Bishop of the diocese, a stern and watchful man, who had all the authority of a king in that province, and appointed, as temporal as well as spiritual lord, all the counsel, judges, and other officers in the district, heard of Vaudès, and recognised in him a dangerous man of the old Huguenot type, tainted with heresy and independence. The ovens, wine-presses, and butcheries on his wide lands were all the Bishop's own property, and no bread could be baked, no grapes pressed, and no cattle killed without paying dues to him; and he summarily caused a bakehouse to be demolished which had been erected by a gentleman who held under the Bishop, and who, being resident on his lands, saw the wretched condition of his tenantry and wished to improve it.

Vaudès' anger blazed up and sent caution to the winds; he had spoken openly and vehemently wherever he could get any one to listen, and what he had said was reported to the Bishop, who caused him to be arrested on his next journey, and his store of books to be brought to him for examination. There was no question of his having fallen within the grip of the law, and after a severe imprisonment in the episcopal jail, he

was sent to Toulon without having been allowed to see his wife and child. There was an especial hardship in this, for although carrying round illegal wares, such as his, was still sharply punished, fine or a moderate imprisonment had become the usual penalty, and it was only because he had the Bishop as his enemy and judge, and the Bishop was all-powerful, that Vaudès went to Toulon.

Geneviève only learned by rumour that her husband was arrested, and when, distracted with grief, she knocked at every door where she thought she might find some one to pity and help her, she was everywhere repulsed. To sympathise with one who had fallen under the Bishop's displeasure was too dangerous, especially for any who had been buyers of Vaudès' prohibited wares, and these were numerous, for already a great eagerness to read all writings by those known as the Encyclopédists prevailed, and every attempt to suppress them only made the public more resolved to obtain them. Want came upon her very soon, and nobody held out a helping hand. She was even given to understand that she had better go elsewhere. The Bishop knew he had done his duty in suppressing the sale of infidel books, and was well pleased to have silenced a troublesome fanatic, and troubled himself not at all as to who might suffer in consequence.

As long as Vaudès was near her, even though in prison, Geneviève remained in the neighbourhood, selling everything she had to sell—clothes, furniture,

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her one or two ornaments; but when she learned that he had been sent to the galleys she lost heart, and made up her mind to return to Lyons and own what had befallen her. When she got back, weak, exhausted, travel-worn with her long journey, carrying a child pining away under the hardships which they had undergone, she found her father dead and her mother full of bitterness and reproaches for the wilful daughter whose misfortunes had justified her warnings. Marrying again a year later, she removed to a distant suburb of Lyons, and there was so little communication between them that she had not heard of the death of Geneviève's baby girl. From the time of her return to Lyons, Geneviève's daily bread, a scanty ration, was eaten with salt tears. She found herself left single-handed to gain a livelihood, desolate and heart-broken. As she had told Mère Allard, she hardly knew how low she might have sunk but for Père Thomas. Hers was a scrupulous, timid nature, jealous and weak, that needed a strong support; she found it in him and in the kind of religion which she learned from him. Up to that time she had never had any serious thoughts at all; she had accepted Vaudès' views unquestioningly because he held them, but in truth she was quite unable to understand the fervent love of humanity, the ardent conviction that he had a mission to fulfil and a duty to live up to which ennobled even his mistakes, and least of all that unhesitating readiness to sacrifice every one and everything to carry out this end, and the willingness to spend

and be spent in this cause, which was a religion to her husband, and which lifted him far above the crowd of demagogues who clamoured for their rights and enriched themselves as fast as they could.

Vaudès was a born fanatic, burning with resentment against the upper classes, and seeing no hope for France but in rooting them out to the last aristocrat. He hated the Church less because her ministers claimed to regulate the affairs of the other world, a domain which he rather contemptuously abandoned to them, than because they were land-owners and seigneurs, temporal lords, like the Bishop who had imprisoned him, and though very far from being a cruel man, no suffering of the innocent, no prayers and tears even of those he loved best moved him at all when this object was in view. Danton, whom he regarded as the true friend of the people, was his idol, and he strongly resented the horror with which his wife viewed both Danton and his admiration for him. It was quite true that they had drifted far apart. To find her entirely under priestly influence on his return had been such a shock as she could not even imagine.

"You do not know what Père Thomas saved me from, nor what my faith is to me," she said; and indeed he could not know, for her form of religion seemed to him only another name for superstition, and his wife appeared merely to have gone over to the side of his oppressors. Whether the priest were bad or good he did not care; he was a priest, and that sufficed. Thousands of men,

seeing the deep corruption and worldliness of the French Church at that time, felt like Vaudès.

All this made a deep gulf between husband and wife, a gulf of which she, sitting sad and lonely in her solitary home, or shrinking from the noisy talk of his friends when they sought him there, was even more conscious than he, absorbed in the stir and rush of public events, and able for the first time to feel himself a power. The relations between husband and wife grew very strained. Geneviève would say to herself that if Vaudès cared at all for her he could not have resisted her entreaties and tears; he could not have borne to see her so miserable. She was too true a woman to understand or admit that to one so convinced of the absolute justice of his cause there is no choice but, if need be, to endure to see even the best-beloved suffer. Geneviève only knew that she was most unhappy, and indeed she had reason to be so, for though, as she had passionately declared to Mère Allard, Vaudès was naturally a gentle and tender man, he was taking a bloody part in what he held to be a crusade against tyranny.

She was thinking about it all, and she smiled bitterly and painfully as she recollected how differently she had looked on everything four years earlier, and how she would have scorned any prophet who had told her what she should feel now. She had been very anxious and lonely when Vaudès was away on his journeys with those books, which since then she had learned to think

of with horror; and lonelier and sadder still while he was in prison, and every one had looked coldly on her, even her own mother; but she had always looked forward to his return, his joy in being at home again with her after his journeys, and when he came back from imprisonment, how all past trouble would be forgotten. But now when he came home after an absence, instead of eager expectation of all he would have to report, and warm interest in every trifle he might relate, she could only shrink from any mention of public events, could only meet him with sad eyes eloquent with reproach. And then she felt herself of so little importance to him now! He was either away from home or came there absorbed by public events, or was surrounded by men whom she detested, whose talk sickened her, whose hopes and plans she abhorred.

Vaudès very well understood her feelings, and, both to spare them and to protect herself and him from the danger that any manifestation of them would have brought upon them, he would bid her, more sternly than he knew, if she could not welcome his friends to keep out of their way, and she would go to Mère Allard, or to her bed if the hour were late enough, and lie there, shedding bitter tears, listening to the loud voices in hot discussion in the next room, and feel as if she would have liked to die before all these things happened, and before she had been crowded out of Vaudès' heart.

She thought so now as she sat with her heart aching for her dead baby and the boy who had died while

Vaudès was imprisoned, and whose loss seemed renewed by the death of the other infant. Formerly she had laid the loss of their first child to the cruelty of the Bishop, but she had learned to think it a judgment for Vaudès' misdeeds in carrying about those books, and she sat thinking that had he lived a quiet life and not gone against his superiors, the boy would have lived. Perhaps this last one would have lived too had she not grieved and fretted over Vaudès, she said to herself, recalling Mère Allard's words; it would not have been so weak and sickly if she had been less unhappy; but Heaven was angry, and took it away, and no wonder. Ah, she had so counted on this little one bringing her husband back to her! He loved children so much, and had so longed for them in his own house. And now! Perhaps he would blame her, and say the baby had suffered by her fault in letting herself fret, Geneviève thought, with self-tormenting fears, which she would never have known had she been less feeble and unwell; but she was weak with recent illness and want of proper care and food as well as with sorrow, for not only was food at famine price, but the exertion in getting bread at all was very great, for each householder had to carry his order to the baker's shop in his quarter, and wait in turn to receive the ration due to him, and the press and crowd were so great that often those who had gone early in the morning had not struggled up to the shop by four or five in the afternoon.

Geneviève sighed wearily as she thought of the long

waiting in the impatient crowd which she must endure the next day, and she got up and went slowly to bed, still thinking of Vaudès and her troubles, and of that orphaned babe of whom Mère Allard had spoken. She would have liked to fetch it—yes, very much. Her heart would feel less empty, she thought, if she could hold a child to it, even another woman's, the poor little desolate creature! It at least would need her and miss her, and it would be a good deed to bring it up. Mère Allard had said it would count against those crimes—ah, yes, they were great crimes—which Vaudès had committed. If she brought it home and he once saw it, surely he would never have the heart to send it away to the Maternity House, where every one knew three children out of four died! She would tell him that God had given them this babe to bring up instead of the one He had taken away. Ah, but Vaudès did not believe in any God except that Supreme Being perhaps, of whom Robespierre and the others talked, without being any the more pitiful or forgiving, and who seemed as far away as if he had been one of those Greek deities who lay on Mount Olympus, serene above the thunder, while it broke on the wrecked and wretched world below.

Geneviève went to bed and soon slept, worn out; but the thought of her own dead baby and of the one at Les Récluses was present throughout all her dreams, and she awoke in the early morning and got up and prepared to fetch her bread, still thinking about it, and

with the longing to fetch it ever more and more strong within her, though she recollected with some anger Mère Allard's suggestion that if Vaudès should seem to take his child's death very much to heart she might allow him to believe the little foundling his own. Of course that was not to be thought of; Mère Allard was a wicked old woman to have hinted at such a thing, though, to spare Vaudès pain, she wished it had been possible. Poor Vaudès, coming home by-and-by, expecting to find himself again a father! He had bidden her good-bye so tenderly, spoken just as he used long ago. How should she tell him? She was a very nervous, timid woman, and she had neither been trained in scrupulous truth nor had she moral courage. There was no definite plan in her mind now, nor did she look her own thoughts fully in the face; she let herself be carried along, only feeling more and more uncertain what to do. For the moment she had to get food, and that was toil and trouble enough, and more too. If only she could do without bread! but she had tried it and missed it too much, poor black stuff though it was, hardly so good as *métail*; no other food seemed to make up for the want of it.

She kept considering about the child as she walked through the streets, where as yet hardly any one was astir except women, coming out early like herself with the hope of being first at the baker's to present their permit for a certain number of ounces of bread, or else to get permissions from the municipality as soon as its

sitting began. The small number of shops allowed to sell bread caused much distress among the vendors and endless inconvenience among the buyers, and so fierce was the assault sometimes made by the half-starved crowd on the shops, that the owners bolted and barred doors and windows and defended them with shutters, making a sort of little wicket in the door through which the permit might be passed in and the allowance of bread passed out. Already there was a dense mass of people crowding up to the shop where Geneviève had to present her order, pressing, scolding, pushing, till the more weakly and timid gave way and dropped wearily back, yielding up their places at the cost of waiting for hours, for the throng grew and grew until it not only overfilled the narrow street, but extended down two or three more. Every time that Geneviève had to go through such an experience as this she thought she could never endure it again, and her heart rebelled at being left alone by her husband to bear such fatigue and rough usage, enduring the heavy, unconscious pressure of the crowd of hungry, exasperated women, many of them with children in their arms, and all as loud and pitiless as a crowd is sure to be in such circumstances, especially if it consist of women, or flushing under abuse and rough handling when she tried to advance. A buzz of impatient voices filled the air, now and then broken by the sharp cry of some one pressed suddenly against the shop door or jostled away just as she reached it, and the mass of people surged

backwards and forwards, hardly seeming to diminish, though each as she succeeded in getting her allowance passed on along the street in front of her, making her way as best she could through the people pressing into it, and all the rest got a step nearer to the wicket.

Geneviève's turn came at length, when she had waited four mortal hours. She edged her way to the door and slipped in her *bon* through the opening; the baker within carefully scrutinised it, and passed out the usual number of ounces of bread, and she struggled on, exhausted and faint. As she got beyond the press she began to breathe more freely, and walked on, thankful that this battle was over for the time. She stopped all at once as she was about to pass a woman sitting on the ground, leaning against the pedestal which once had supported the statue of some historical personage, but now was crowned by a plaster figure representing the goddess Reason. The woman had a baby at her breast, whimpering faintly as if it found no food there. Another lay with its head on her lap, asleep or ill. It was a common sight enough in those times. She did not stir or beg, but looked up at Geneviève with terrible eyes of famine. Famine was written in the haggard face, the thin bare feet and hands. Geneviève broke her portion of bread in half and gave it her. She clutched it, as if suddenly roused to life, seized Geneviève's hand, and kissed it without a word. Geneviève went on trembling, her eyes full of tears.

There was a stir in the next street; she had had to

make a round, as she could not get back through the flocking crowd in the street by which she had come. Some popular excitement was evidently calling the mob together; she could not see what it was, but suddenly guessed with a start of sick horror that for some reason the usual hour of execution had been altered, and that the people were gathering to see the passage of the tumbrils laden with victims to feed the guillotine awaiting them in the Place Bellecour.

To be detected in avoiding the dreadful sight was in itself a death-warrant. Geneviève walked on, not daring to hurry, trembling all over, hardly able to make her limbs bear her, and full of fear lest any passer-by should notice her, and accuse her looks of betraying want of patriotism. She could already hear heavy wheels rolling slowly in the distance, and the shouting and the tramp of many feet, which showed that although the population were growing somewhat indifferent to a sight no longer novel, it still took a savage pleasure in seeing the helpless victims carried out to death. The square into which she had now come was as yet almost empty. It had suffered severely in the siege; shattered roofs and walls were tottering to their fall, and showed with what terrible effect the red-hot shot and shell used by the besieging army had been showered upon it. Evidently the church which stood here had been especially aimed at; its spire was wrecked, its roof knocked to pieces, its windows and doors were smashed, and the interior had been gutted. A man, dressed like

a humble bourgeois, was walking past it; he gave a momentary glance at the ruins, full of deep anger and sorrow, and then paused an instant and listened to the death-carts coming nearer. Geneviève sank on the steps which led to the great western door of the church; she could go no further. The mingled sounds which told that the tumbrils were close at hand grew louder, and the foremost of the accompanying crowd poured into the square, men laughing and shouting, women uttering shrill cries of hate and insult, or joining in the chorus of a song raised by those still out of sight. Geneviève turned pale and sick as she caught the words of a blasphemous parody of the Mass. The man whom she had noticed had mounted to the topmost step, and was looking out along the street.

“Dies iræ, dies illa,
Solvat sæclum in favilla,”

he murmured under his breath.

Other spectators were not slow to profit by the same coign of vantage, so that he immediately became only one of a group, crowding together, and commenting on the prisoners now passing before them in the carts, with their arms bound, three closely-packed tumbrils'-full—soldiers who had been in many battles, men who had filled honourable civil offices, women old and young, a few thieves and other criminals, together with several artisans, whose humble position had not protected them from being swept away with the rest. They were all

of them very quiet and dignified, except, indeed, the few who seemed to belong to the criminal class, and gave no token of seeing the fierce and exultant crowd or of hearing the brutal insults heaped on them. Only two among the women looked about restlessly, a mother and daughter apparently; the grey hair of the elder one blew about in the wind across her eyes, and she vainly tried to shake it back, unable to put up her bound hands, and her troubled demeanour delighted the crowd jostling round the carts. Presently, however, the younger one whispered to her, and she looked eagerly towards the church; both bowed their heads as if in prayer, while the tumbrils passed heavily on, with the throng rushing and howling round them.

The square was as suddenly deserted as it had been filled; only distant shouts, and steps dying away, and the lessening sound of wheels told what was going on. A few people continued to pass through, who had paused to let the crowd disperse. Geneviève gathered what strength she had, and rose, just as the last spectator came down from the steps. He paused and looked at her.

"Père Thomas!" she exclaimed, surprised out of all caution, and then, even before he could return a look of warning, she glanced in terror around to see if any one had overheard her rash exclamation.

There was no one within earshot. The priest walked beside her, saying, "I have passed unsuspected through all the town to-day."

"I thought you had left Lyons or had been arrested, Father," said Geneviève, inexpressibly thankful to meet the priest who had been her stay when sinking in a sea of trouble, yet terrified both for him and herself.

One or two people gave them a glance, but without any special interest. They passed for two people of the middle class going about every-day affairs. Both carefully avoided any show of emotion or of interest in what they were saying.

"I have not been out of Lyons. Too many of my people have wanted me. I came here to-day because in yonder death-carts were two who sent to beg I would give them absolution as they went to the Place Bellecour."

"Ah!" said Geneviève, comprehending at once the wistful looks of the two women. "They saw you, Father."

"Yes, they saw me. They will soon be beyond the reach of their butchers," said the priest, bending his head and murmuring a prayer, as a great shout from the Place Bellecour told that the first head had fallen under the axe.

Two pretty young girls going through the square started, then went on chatting as if nothing special had occurred. It was an every-day event now, and accepted as part of the usual routine.

"Do you see?" said Geneviève, glancing at them. "What are our girls coming to? Yet those two saw

what we did—that mother and daughter and the others.”

“Waste no tears for them,” said the priest; “grieve only for those yet left to suffer.”

“Ah, yes, and for those yet left to sin. Father, you pray for my husband as I begged you? He sorely needs your prayers.”

Père Thomas’ face darkened.

“Most true. It was Jacques Vaudès who rose in the National Assembly a week ago to propose that if any complaint should be brought against a priest by a lay citizen that he should be exiled, or if he persisted in remaining that the penalty should be death. Such was his answer to the faint plea for toleration urged by the renegade Fauchet. Thank Heaven we owe nothing to that impious traitor.”

He spoke low but with concentrated scorn and bitterness as he alluded to the Bishop of Calvados, one of the very few of the higher clergy who had taken the oath of fidelity to the Republic.

Geneviève answered by a deep sigh. She had not heard of this, but though a fugitive and in hiding, Père Thomas was perfectly well informed of what was passing both in Lyons and Paris.

“My baby is dead, Father,” she said.

“God keep it for you hereafter, my daughter. You have a little voice in Paradise all your own to plead for you.”

“Yes, Father,” and she added, as the thought which

had been haunting her flashed back into her mind, "There is a little babe left orphaned in Les Récluses whose mother died of fever a day or two ago."

"I know it. Her husband was murdered in Pierre Cise. Her brother had escaped from this unhappy place, but he has returned to see what became of her after M. de Roche Hugon's death."

"The poor brother! To run into such danger only to learn that she is dead!"

"He is indeed in danger, since he is not only noble, but belonged to the regiment of volunteers, and was distinguished among them for his rash courage."

Geneviève uttered a sound of dismay. Popular feeling was strong against all members of this regiment, composed almost entirely of nobles who had volunteered to serve in the siege, and had become famous for their dash and daring, though, from their having no uniform, the Red party contemptuously called them "nankeen soldiers."

"Your husband will not return for some days," said Père Thomas, who seemed to know much more about Vaudès than she did. "You can shelter M. de la Tremblaye to-night; to-morrow we must find means of getting him out of the city."

It was bidding her risk her head, but it was not that which made her hesitate.

"If my husband were to hear of it!" she murmured.

"Atone by this good deed as far as you can for his evil ones," said Père Thomas, with the uncompromising

sternness which was welcome to her weaker nature. "Be thankful that the opportunity is given you."

"Yes," said Geneviève, faintly. "That is what Mère Allard said. Father, if I took that baby would it be a further atonement? God would perhaps be pleased, and Mary too, if I took it instead of my poor little one."

"Would your husband consent?" asked Père Thomas in surprise.

"I—I do not know. Mère Allard said I need not tell him—directly."

Père Thomas perhaps understood the working of her mind better than she did herself. He paused, thinking.

"The poor little thing would else go to the Maternity House," she urged falteringly, and looking with uncertainty at his impassive face.

"True, and be brought up an infidel, unless it were happy enough to die."

"And—and Vaudès?"

"He may be thankful that one life is spared through his wife," said Père Thomas, with severity.

He did not touch the question which had begun to shape itself to her; he knew her too well not to see how it would probably decide itself, but he neither advised her to deceive her husband nor forbade it. He left the matter on one side. In another case he would have reprobated the mere suggestion, but Vaudès was an enemy to the Church, a Jacobin, an unbeliever, and he did not feel that any terms need be kept with him.

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"Then I will do it," said Geneviève, with sudden resolution, feeling the responsibility shifted to the shoulders of her spiritual guide. "I will go this afternoon to Les Récluses. And—and—the poor gentleman—M. de la Tremblaye?"

"He or both of us will be at your house to-night."

"Oh, come too, Father, I beseech you! Give me the opportunity of confession. You do not know what a burden—"

Père Thomas did not answer or interrupt her by word or sign, yet, as if some warning had passed from his mind to hers, she stopped speaking. A man who had been walking behind them came up and cast a suspicious and scrutinising look on both. Geneviève recognised danger, and turned pale. Père Thomas slackened his pace.

"Adieu, citoyenne," he said, without raising his voice, but very distinctly, "commend me to your husband, there is no better patriot in France than Jacques Vaudès."

He turned with deliberate steps into a side street and the man, in whom he had recognised an agent of the Jacobin council now ruling in Lyons, muttered, "Citoyenne Vaudès—all must be right then;" but he stopped her to ask, "When will the citizen return?" and she felt that he was examining her face stealthily.

"I do not know," answered Geneviève, perfectly understanding why she was detained; "he writes me word that the citizen Danton desires to consult with

him and Chardon over further measures concerning Ville Affranchie."

She carefully gave Lyons its new name, and drawing out a letter held it to the spy, so that he could see the signature. He nodded, but said, "You had met a friend, it appears?"

"Yes; it was some time since I had seen him."

"A bourgeois, seemingly?"

"Oh no, nothing so well-to-do," she answered, smiling; "he never had much money even before the siege, and he has less than ever now. Good day, citizen."

She walked on with her heart beating until it almost choked her, yet preserving the self-command which even the most timid and nervous woman can exert when those she love are concerned, and Geneviève was profoundly attached to Père Thomas.

When she grew a little calmer, although still uneasy about what had passed, the load on her heart was greatly lightened. She had recovered what her timid, scrupulous nature craved, a guide whom she could follow blindly. Vaudès had once held this place with her, but she looked back to that time with remorse, and prayed to be forgiven for ever having encouraged him and sympathised in his plans. It was a sin to have done so, Père Thomas said, and she must atone for it by all the good works she could do. She could not cease to love Vaudès, but she saw his actions and his character through the eyes of the priest, who was so austere, and yet who had been so kind to her in

adversity, and was such a holy, devoted man, and it almost broke her heart.

When she got home she sank down on a chair exhausted for a while; but soon she started up and began to review such poor provisions as she had in the house. There were some eggs and rice, and a few vegetables; those who had money could buy such things, although bread was so scarce, and Vaudès had lately sent her a little. She dared not buy anything more in this part of the town, where it might have led to remark; but she might venture to do so, she thought, in some more distant street, when on her way to Les Récluses. She did not pause to consider how Vaudès would have regarded her spending his money on entertaining a noble and a priest; humanity alone would have bidden her show all the hospitality she could to a fugitive, and the prospect of sheltering a priest filled her with such gladness that there was no room left for fear of consequences. It seemed to her that a blessing must come to her dwelling with his mere presence.

"It is worth any risk," she murmured joyfully to herself; and indeed peril and death had become such every-day things that they had grown almost indifferent. People had become so accustomed to the dangers from shot and shell during the siege, that they had learned to go out and about just as if no such deadly rain were falling, or would flock recklessly to any place where the enemy's fire was especially directed to watch what would happen; and as for helping fugitives, far greater

risks than Geneviève was incurring were perpetually run without hesitation by people who were total strangers to those they were serving. In this great convulsion everything that was best as well as all that was worst came to the surface, and heroism and crimes which would both have seemed unnatural at another time now became every-day things: Geneviève's chief thought was how to make her little preparations as far as possible from the window, lest any chance passer-by should look in and notice them, and set some report of them about, so deeply had the necessity of caution become impressed on every one, and so small a thing was it which might bring trouble, perhaps arrest and death, with it.

For the same reason she must make it understood by some one in the neighbourhood that she was going out by-and-by on an errand of Mère Allard's, or there would be all sorts of speculations as to why she was abroad again a second time in one day, especially as she had not been out more than twice or thrice since her baby's birth. It had died very suddenly, and probably hardly any one knew either of its birth or death. She was glad of that now. There were people living in the house besides herself, but she did not even know them by sight; they kept quite aloof, perhaps for good reasons, and held no communication with Jacques Vaudès' wife, or indeed with any one else as far as she knew. She hoped that no one would be stirring when Père Thomas and his companion came; perhaps if any one observed them they

might pass as friends of Vaudès' come to hear what news she had of him. Evidently Père Thomas knew how to take care of himself, since he was still free and went and came in Lyons; it was to be supposed he would manage equally well for the fugitive of whom he seemed to have taken charge.

Geneviève thought very little about herself that day; her mind was occupied with concern for others. She finished making all the arrangements she could for the comfort of her expected guests, and then she found herself so tired that she had to sit down and rest for some time, pressing her hand to her heart, as if in pain; but she ate something, and rallied her energy, and drawing a shawl around her she left the house and went to seek Mère Allard, and ask for the gown which was to be her excuse for seeking the jailor's wife at Les Récluses.

CHAPTER III.

MÈRE ALLARD received Geneviève with great satisfaction and encouragement, and gave her the gown, made into a neat bundle, with full directions what to do, and stood at her window looking after her until she was quite out of sight, pursing up her lips and nodding in a knowing way, while she chuckled to herself with malicious triumph. She did not like Vaudès, partly because, as she said, he was like a Moor, and partly because he was unlucky, and this stroke of fortune which had now come to him seemed to her odd and unnatural, though in point of fact it was simple enough. But Mère Allard was a prejudiced woman, strongly of opinion that Vaudès had a wife much too good for him, and she was really anxious about Geneviève, and vexed to see her pine and fret.

"Divorce her indeed!" she said indignantly, so ready to believe anything against a man whom she disliked, that she never paused to ask herself whether such a thought had really ever crossed the mind of Vaudès, or whether it were only a sick fear which had

arisen out of Geneviève's own morbid fancies; "we shall see if he divorces the poor girl when he comes home and finds a baby in her arms. That will stop his mouth, I take it," and she nodded defiantly. She was by no means a scrupulous woman, and she rather enjoyed the notion of playing Vaudès this trick.

"Serve him right," she thought; "if he had stayed at home and looked after his wife, as he should, she would not have lost her child. I have no patience with these *cagots*, who talk about the good of all the world and let their own folks go to the wall. She thinks she will have the courage to tell him all about it when he comes home, and that she has taken a noble's child. Ha! ha! I will believe that when I see it," and laughing to herself she went back to her spinning.

Meanwhile Geneviève had a weary way to go from the quarter where she lived in order to reach Les Récluses. The house to which Vaudès had lately moved was in a street on the hill-side; a very humble part of the city, chiefly inhabited by artisans, and behind the little leaded window-panes of each house might be seen some poor family, or a pale weaver throwing his shuttle, or a cobbler mending shoes, but work was as scarce as bread. By-and-by she came to a less poor quarter, where were tall houses of some pretension, but even here the streets were so narrow that two vehicles could hardly pass each other, and there were no lamps, these were still unknown in Lyons; many windows were broken and stuffed with paper, and to add to the

ruinous look of the quarter, the walls were battered with shot, and there were great holes in the roofs. As she passed along she might, had she cared to do so, have known exactly who lived in every house, for at each door was hung a placard with a proclamation, declaring that all who would not acknowledge the one and indivisible Republic must die, and below came a list of every one, old and young, who inhabited the dwelling. A general silence, a deserted look, prevailed everywhere, strange and ominous in a city second only in size and importance to Paris itself.

By-and-by she came to a theatre, and here and there was a little stir; groups of people were reading the play-bills, and commenting on the play announced for that evening, and, little heart as any one seemed likely to have for amusement, as soon as the doors opened there would be a crowd eager to get good places and applaud the actors in 'Brutus, or the Death of a Tyrant,' costumed in the national colours and wearing a tricolor cockade, for the old costumes of wigs and court dresses which all the Greeks and Romans used to wear on the stage were now of course proscribed, and the carmagnole and cap of liberty replaced them. The terrible Comité du Salut Public kept a close watch over the theatres in every town, loudly announcing that henceforward the stage was to be a school to teach the love of civic virtues and the horror of ancient prejudices, but it was only too certain that the playhouses were hot-beds of vice rather than virtue.

Geneviève hurried by with a glance of aversion at the building, and did not slacken her pace until she had to force her reluctant steps to cross the Place Bellecour, once the stateliest part of Lyons, but now fast falling under the blows of a hundred or two of workmen, set by the National Assembly to demolish its handsome houses, as a warning and a punishment to Lyons, or Ville Affranchie, as it was henceforth to be called, for having sought to restrain and chastise the excesses of the Jacobin party. They worked with a will, and it was a dismal sight to see all these homes falling underneath the hammers and pickaxes of the swarming workmen, while a crowd of *canuts* or silk-weavers who had come up from La Croix Rousse, all out of work and even more fierce and unruly than usual, lent eager hands to pull down the tottering masses of stone and brick, regardless of the risk of being crushed by their sudden fall, and shouting encouragement to each other and the workmen.

Great clouds of dust rose into the air, almost darkening the sky, where pearly grey clouds towered up, with spaces of tender rainy blue between them, pure and distant and peaceful, a strange contrast to the fierce passions, the evil triumph, and the wanton destruction going on below. Geneviève chanced to glance up, and this contrast struck her with a sudden pang, and awoke a great yearning to be away from all the cruelty and ruin around her, to lie down somewhere and die, and hear no more impious words, and see no more bloody

deeds; but she knew this could not be. She was very tired of life, indeed, but she was young still, and did not feel as if death would answer her call. Besides, she had something still to do which was worth living for—a life to save, a good deed to perform, which would be counted to her husband, she said to herself, without asking any troublesome questions as to how this could be.

She quickened her steps, eager to escape out of this dismal scene of wreck and ruin, with the awful guillotine standing in the midst, where only that morning a tragedy had been enacted, and which perhaps was awaiting her one day. Even now she could hear a crier shouting the names of a new set of victims, condemned to die on the morrow, and just conducted to the *mauvaise cave*, as the room was called where those condemned to death were taken to spend the night before their execution. She saw more than one person stop suddenly and listen fearfully, and then go on again, perhaps struck to the heart by hearing the name of some friend or relation, perhaps relieved from dread for one more day, and her heart was full of unuttered sympathy.

Suddenly she noticed the man who had followed her in the morning standing among one of the groups in the square, and perceived his eyes were on her. She knew that in the present state of affairs it was dangerous thus to have attracted attention; he would wonder where she was going, and watch her, perhaps follow her to Les Récluses, and question La Michaupe, or, worse

still, hover about her house and observe who went in and out, and of all things she dreaded this just now.

Fear lent her courage. A little further on she saw one of the most violent of the Jacobins of Lyons superintending the work of destruction, and giving orders to the workmen, and though at ordinary times she shrank from him with a loathing which she could hardly hide, she advanced boldly to him and bade him good day. He had sometimes come to her house, and it was one of the things that troubled her most that Vaudès should make a friend of this blood-stained wretch, for she could not understand that to an enthusiast like Vaudès the men of his party all appeared as honest and patriotic as himself. For the moment she was actually thankful to know this Barré.

"You have many hands at work here, and are making fine progress, citizen," she said, looking round at the houses and then at the guillotine with no sign of flinching. Repressed emotion sent colour to her cheeks; she looked very young and pretty.

"How! is it you, citoyenne?" he said, turning round. "This is a joyful sight, *hein?* Does it not make the heart glow to behold the dwellings where the *ci-devants* lurked like beasts of prey pulled down and levelled with mother earth? We will not leave a stone of their lairs to tempt them back; we must make a clean sweep of the aristocrats as well as of the *monaille* and the *pretraille*."

"With *mitraille?*" said Geneviève, smiling, and

though it was with quivering lips, and she hated herself for having found a jest to make on the fusillades which daily mowed down whole lines of victims in Les Brotteaux, the repartee served her turn, for Barré broke into a loud laugh.

"Well said, citoyenne, upon my word. And where may you be going?" he asked, looking at her with a coarse admiration which made her shrink like an insult.

"I have to carry some work to La Michaude, the jailor's wife at Les Récluses," she said, involuntarily drawing back from him.

"Perhaps the citoyenne has some friends lodging there just now?" asked the agent who had been watching her, with disagreeable significance.

"None, citizen; my husband's friends are all good patriots, who put others in prison, but are not found there themselves," she answered, looking at him with a smile.

"That is true; I can answer for the patriotism of Jacques Vaudès and his wife as for my own," said Barré, and as she passed on he answered something which the other said with a sharpness which startled his spy. "*Sapristi!* let her alone, I tell you. She is all right. What stuff are you talking? It were well to watch the wives of these cursed aristocrats a little more closely instead of the wives of good citizens. There is enough to do without disquieting good patriots, or their wives either, when they have as pretty faces as that one. Her husband's absence seems to agree with

her. Silence, I say! What if you did see her talking to some one you did not know? Do you know everybody in Lyons? If so, how is it that La Tremblaye, who is known to have returned to the city, cannot be found? nor Armand Ligny, nor that pestilent *calotin* Thomas? Tell me that if thou canst, since thou art so desirous of serving the Republic."

The agent of police muttered some reply.

"Find them, then, but beware of angering Jacques Vaudès; he is like to make thy head spin off thy shoulders when he returns, if he finds thou hast meddled with his wife, and he has Danton at his back. Wouldst like to embrace Sainte Guillotine, *hein?*"

It did not seem an agreeable suggestion; the spy turned white at the mere idea, and gave a fearful glance at the guillotine standing on high in the middle of the square, with the houses falling in ruins all round it. Some instinct had told him, in spite of the admirable disguise of Geneviève's companion in the morning, that here was prey for him; but at the suggestion that the chase might bring more danger than profit, a hint too coming from the all-powerful Barré, and alarmed at the warning that he might be accused of want of zeal in another direction, he at once turned his attention elsewhere,

But Geneviève could not know that, and she went on with a cold fear at her heart, making her way with weary limbs towards the Sâone, reflecting blue sky and floating clouds as it wound through the city, dividing it

into two parts, hurrying to join the stately Rhone, which then flowed on the outskirts of the city. There was a curious silence around, arising partly from no one venturing out for pleasure, and from the slackness of all occupations, but also because no vehicle whatever was passing through the streets, for all the horses had been sent to the army, and every one had to go on foot. Far overhead rose the tall spire of Fourvières, where no one now dared carry votive offerings or pray before the shrines, once so favourite a place of pilgrimage; and a little way further on was the Hôtel Dieu, where the sick and wounded had been gathered during the siege, and whose black flag had only made it the chief point whither the fire of the assailants had been directed. Vaudès had been among them, as his wife sadly remembered. He had fled from the city when the moderate party gained the ascendancy, and returned among the besiegers. The hospital was even more completely wrecked than the church which Geneviève had passed in the morning, but indeed everywhere were dismal traces of strife and desolation. Already grass began to grow in some of the streets, and innumerable houses were shut up and uninhabited, whose owners had fled to Belgium or Switzerland or England, or were dead, or under arrest in some prison like Les Récluses, around which Geneviève found a crowd gathered, the friends of the captives, who had been waiting for hours with baskets of food which they hoped to send in to the prisoners.

This was quite another crowd to that which had besieged the baker's shop in the morning ; here nothing had any effect but patience and bribery, and Geneviève looked with deep pity at the sad, imploring faces, and noticed with silent indignation how the turnkeys and their wives openly went and came among them, negotiating and refusing to carry in the provisions if the bribe offered were not high enough, and how not a few women and children, too poor to tempt them, had to take their baskets back, and went away sobbing, or saw them opened by some brutal official, who ate the contents before their eyes with a laugh, and flung them back the empty basket.

She would not look any more lest her feelings should be read in her eyes, and going up to the nearest turnkey, she asked for the citoyenne Michaude. The wife of the head jailor was far too important a personage for such a demand not to obtain immediate attention, but she had to explain her business, and that she came from Mère Allard, and even then she was not allowed to enter by the main door, but was sent round to one opening into a side street. This was presently opened by another turnkey, who allowed her to go into the rooms belonging to Michaud's family, and he called a third, bidding him find the jailor's wife. She looked a kindly sort of woman enough, and when Geneviève had settled with her about the dress, she ventured to ask about the baby left on her hands. La Michaude made a gesture of despair.

"What would you have? My husband says it must go this evening. He beat me to-day for having kept it so long. I know it was a folly, but there, one is a mother. I wish the poor little marmot had any friends who would take it. I was the first person who ever held it in her arms, and so I have a feeling for it, you see, and it is a sweet little angel, and it is a pity to send it to the Maternité; but what can I do?"

"There has been no one to claim it?"

"No one; how should there? The mother kept talking in her fever about her husband and her brother, and how they would fetch it, and nothing would serve her but to call it *Espérance*; a priest who has been transported to Cayenne since christened it. Well, one could not hinder that if one would, and it comforted her."

"Yes, I dare say it did. She did not know then that her husband had been murdered in *Pierre Cise*?"

Geneviève did not recollect until she had said this that she was supposed to know nothing about the child's family, and she was alarmed at the slip she had made, but *La Michau* did not observe it.

"She knew well enough till the fever took her. Some of the prisoners who came in after the women were brought from *Pierre Cise* told what went on there; but when the fever got hold of her she fancied him alive, and kept declaring he would come for the child."

"And you said something about a brother," said

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Geneviève, anxious to learn how much was known about M. de la Tremblaye.

"I know nothing about him. There is some talk that he is in the city, but I do not believe it. You do not suppose he would walk up to the prison and ask for the child? Not such a fool as that. Besides, how should he know it was born?"

"It seems such a pity to send it to the Maternité. If I could keep it for a few days perhaps some friend might claim it," said Geneviève; not that she supposed this in the least likely, but rather to protect herself against the suspicion of intending to keep the infant altogether.

"Bah! In these times? But it would be a kind thing to do," said La Michau, catching herself up, and very anxious to get rid of the baby, yet reluctant to send it to such a place as the Maternity House. "At the worst you could send it away by-and-by, citoyenne. I do not know your name."

"Vaudès," answered Geneviève, unwillingly. She would very much have preferred not to give it.

"How! are you the wife of Jacques Vaudès?"

"Yes."

"Indeed!" said La Michau, with visible increase of respect; "he is a great patriot, your husband. And will he be willing to keep the child, think you?"

"I shall see when he comes home. But, citoyenne, you will say nothing about it to any one if I take the child? not to my husband or any one? If he should be displeased with me, it would vex him more to have

it spoken of, and in any case perhaps I do a rash thing in taking an aristocrat's baby."

"Do not fear; I shall hold my tongue, I promise you," answered La Michaude, alarmed lest Geneviève should after all leave the infant on her hands. "You need not tell me that it does not do to let one's tongue wag now-a-days. Would you not like to see the little one? I will fetch it; one of the *ci-devants* has it just now. I cannot take you upstairs without a permit; that is not allowed, though, *ma foi!* people are usually more anxious to get out of this place than to get in, though truly they do not often stay here so long that they need get tired of it. But I will go and fetch you the child. Wait a moment."

She went away and returned with the infant in her arms. It looked at Geneviève with the unconscious eyes of a very young child, dark, serious eyes, "like its mother's," La Michaude said, and Geneviève stood gazing at it, thinking of what Mère Allard and the priest had said, and feeling with heart-sick pain how little it could replace her own child.

"Well, what will you do?" said La Michaude, growing impatient of her silent contemplation of the little creature.

"I will take it with me if you will say nothing."

"Oh yes, I give you my word for that," said La Michaude, much relieved. "When one keeps one's mouth shut, flies cannot get in, as they say. If you like to have it I am glad enough to let it go, for, as

I said just now, my husband—" She gave herself an expressive shake, and lifted her hand with a gesture as if to strike. "Yes, yes, his hand is heavy, I can tell you. Will he ask where the child is? Not he, so long as I say it is gone. But it is an odd thing for you to burden yourself with a strange child."

"We have not too many in our house," said Geneviève, with a tremble in her voice which caught the ear of La Michaude.

"Ah, perhaps you have lost one?" she said, looking curiously at her. "Well, one may not want the brats before they come, but they leave a big hole if they go. Why, I shall miss even this one badly," she added, looking at the baby with a warm motherly tenderness which made her homely face very pleasant for the moment—a tenderness which Geneviève, gentle and duty-loving though she was, would never feel for a child not her own. "There! take the poor little cabbage; anyhow it will fare better with you than at the Maternité, or here either, I dare say, for I have no time to look after it properly. I settled for my gown, you know. My hands are too full now-a-days for needle-work, you see, so I have to put it out, and I knew Mère Allard before I married, and so— 'Tis a pretty little thing," she broke off, with a hearty kiss to the child, now in Geneviève's arms. "Poor little wretch! it has begun life badly enough—born in a prison, and no one so much as to ask what has become of it. But maybe

its friends will turn up," she added hastily, closing the door on Geneviève as rapidly as she could, in evident alarm lest she had said anything which might make her repent having assumed the responsibility of the infant.

Geneviève went homeward with the child asleep in her arms. Perhaps, if it had been possible, she would have justified La Michaupe's fears by drawing back and leaving it on her hands, for now that she had committed herself a trembling fear of the consequences came over her; but she fortified herself by the recollection that she was doing what Père Thomas had bidden her, and she would tell Vaudès how it had all come about; not that Père Thomas had had a hand in it, of course, but all the rest, and beg him to let her keep the child. It was a pretty little thing, she thought, rather coldly, as she looked down at it; he surely could not send it away—and to keep it would expiate so much.

She washed and fed it when she got home, with gentler handling than it had been accustomed to, and tears fell as she thought of the two dead children who were her own. When the little Espérance was asleep, she reluctantly looked through the little stock of clothes which she had prepared for the one just buried, and the few things which had belonged to the elder one, all carefully laid aside, even to the last half-worn-out little petticoat, and scented with orris root—treasures in the poor mother's eyes, and many a time unfolded and perfumed and laid away again with a great heartache.

She took out one thing after another, and settled how by-and-by this thing and that would be serviceable for her new charge, though with a certain unwillingness and guilt, as if she were doing a wrong to her own lost babies.

"Somehow I do not think I shall ever have a child to live; it is not God's will to give me that happiness," she thought with a sob.

It showed how much she and Vaudès had drifted apart in all their interests, that she hardly thought about him at all with regard to the adopted child. It seemed to her not his concern, but hers, whether they took it. She should have the trouble of it, and mother it, and Heaven would receive this good work as a set-off against less satisfactory ones. As for deceiving him in any way, she did not at all consciously harbour the thought, but nevertheless it lay dormant in her mind, and might perhaps suddenly quicken into life.

The daylight faded away; it disappeared early from this narrow street, and even before nightfall no one seemed stirring in the neighbourhood. There was too much disorder in the town, too much want and consequent lawlessness for quiet people to be out late, especially as no one wanted to attract attention, except the leading members of the "Mountain," as the ultra republican party was called, who swaggered about with ostentatious arrogance, proudly conscious that they had the lives of all their fellow-citizens in their hands.

The quiet of this humble and poor quarter was seldom

disturbed by those arrests by torchlight, that terrible knocking at the door and summons to open in the name of the Republic, which kept the richer parts of the city in a ferment of alarm; but such things were not unknown even here, for the very poverty and uninviting look of this district suggested it as a refuge to fugitives, who hoped that no one would suspect them of choosing such a refuge, and concealed themselves here under false names, with permissions of residence procured by bribes, or perhaps forged.

By ten o'clock the street, gloomy at noonday, was as dark as pitch. There was no moon, and the night was cloudy. Rain began to fall, and the wind rose. Geneviève went cautiously to the door, opened it almost imperceptibly, and listened intently, with a great fear lest the spy who had dogged her in the morning should be lurking near, on the watch for any one who went out or in. Nothing, as she knew, was more likely.

Whether it were so or not she could not tell; the darkness was too complete for it to be possible to distinguish anything a yard off. She strained her eyes as she glanced up and down the street, but all was as still as if the hour had been midnight. Hardly a light was to be seen at any window; every house seemed shut up and asleep. Geneviève had a low fire burning, but had not dared to light a candle; now, however, fearing that Père Thomas would not be able to make out which house to go to, she set one on a table and stood at the door, holding it ajar, and waited. Some-

thing came scurrying along with a rapid patter, dark creatures just visible as they went by and vanished; she started back and shut the door, but knew directly that the creatures were a pack of ownerless dogs, which had become almost wild, and hunted in packs by night for any food they could find. She opened her door again, and by-and-by she heard steps which sounded alarmingly distinct in the silent street and to her fearful ear, though, as she presently found, both men had wrapped rags about their boots to deaden the sound. There were two people; she went a step forward, and heard Père Thomas ask, "The Citoyenne Vaudès?"

"Enter," she answered in haste, and admitted him and his companion. But for the voice she would not have known him; he wore a different disguise from that of the morning, and looked like a lawyer of the middle class; his friend had a carmagnole and cap such as the Montagnards were accustomed to wear, and his hair was dressed in Republican fashion. Père Thomas had never had so much trouble in his life as in making the Vicomte de la Tremblaye consent to assume this disguise, but having once yielded, he seemed to feel himself acting a part in a comedy, and piqued himself on carrying it through successfully.

"*Ma foi!* it is hard to find your abode, madame," he said; "I owe you much gratitude for this friendly shelter. But for that I really do not know where I should have spent the night after I left the theatre."

"The theatre, monsieur! You cannot mean that



"He knelt down by the cradle where the baby slept, and looked at it with dark, soft eyes like those of the infant."—PAGE 73.

you have been at the theatre!" exclaimed Geneviève, looking at him with incredulous surprise.

"Why not?" he asked, laughing. "One must go somewhere, and I hoped to see some of my friends there, fugitives like myself, who had no better refuge; besides, one must amuse oneself a little. And so I did," he added, laughing again at the recollections of the costumes he had seen, and the sentiments which he had heard.

"One place is hardly more dangerous than another," said Père Thomas, calmly. "But now, my daughter, can you give M. de la Tremblaye something to eat? he has fasted many hours. And where is the child?"

He seemed to take it as a matter of course that Geneviève had done as he bade her, and brought it away from Les Récluses.

"I have food here, Father, such as it is—and there is the little one."

"A royal supper, worthy of Vatel—compared to any I have seen these ten days," said the Vicomte, with unfeigned satisfaction; "and if you, madame, would convert these eggs into an omelette—I am persuaded you make omelettes divinely. And is this my little niece, the child of my poor Alix? She is in good hands, I am very sure; some day I shall return to show my gratitude for your kind action, when this *giboulée* is past." He knelt down by the cradle where the baby slept, and looked at it with dark, soft eyes

like those of the infant. They glistened with tears as he contemplated it.

"What is her name?" he asked, still looking at the baby features, in which he sought to trace some likeness to his dead sister.

"Espérance, monsieur."

"Espérance!" he repeated; "poor little prison flower! who gave her such a name in these dismal days?"

"It was the poor mother's choice, monsieur, so La Michau de told me, and a priest who was also imprisoned baptized her."

"Ah, you are sure of that?" said Père Thomas. "It would doubtless be the curé of Vaise, he was arrested nearly at the same time as your sister, M. le Vicomte. Now eat and rest while you can."

"Ah, monsieur, how can you have escaped detection with such white hands?" exclaimed Geneviève involuntarily, as she served the omelette, and helped the Vicomte, who was already attacking the food set upon the table with the appetite of a man who for many days has been upon short commons.

He laughed gaily. "An inconvenient heritage," he said, looking at Père Thomas, who had vainly urged him to dye them of a browner tint. "We all have these hands in our family—you will see, my little niece will possess them. Just now they are decidedly too conspicuous."

"That is what I have been constantly telling you.

It is absolutely necessary to find some means of hiding them—they tell of an aristocrat a league off, and besides, clean hands are too rare in these days not to attract notice,” said the priest, with a bitter smile. “You must acquire a more plebeian air before you attempt to leave the city to-morrow.”

“But how does monsieur intend to leave the city?” asked Geneviève, looking anxiously from one to the other.

“*Parbleu !* I wish you could tell me,” he answered, turning to her with a smile. “That is precisely what I do not know,” and he went on with his supper.

“Nevertheless it must be done,” said Père Thomas, decisively; “it is perfectly well known that you are in Lyons, and a strict search is being made for you. It is only by shifting your lodging every day that you have escaped until now.”

“And that grows so tedious that I should prefer, I think, the settled habitation of a prison, especially as one would probably not have time to find it *ennuyeux*, and there would be excellent company there,” said the Vicomte, going on with his supper.

“But no one has been allowed to leave the town these two days, unless with a permit from the municipality,” said Geneviève. “People may enter, but not leave it; that was the order to-day and yesterday, and no doubt it will be the same to-morrow.”

“I fancy my presence here has something to do with

that order. The attention your municipality pays me honours me greatly."

"But what can be done, monsieur?"

"Night brings counsel," said the Vicomte carelessly.

He did not seem half so much concerned about his safety as did Père Thomas, nor, though he made gracious apologies to Geneviève for the trouble he was giving her, and the charge which she would have in his niece, did he appear much concerned about the risk she ran in thus sheltering him. Perhaps he thought it only natural and right that one of the lower orders should run risks for a noble. He fell asleep on a chair as soon as he had finished his supper, evidently tired out, and the firelight, as it now and then leaped up in a momentary flame, brought his delicate, pale, sharply-cut features into strong relief; they looked as still and pallid as if they had been moulded in alabaster. It would be very difficult indeed to make him look like a good patriot of Barré's sort, Geneviève thought while she sat opposite to him, consulting in low whispers with Père Thomas, and unburdening her heart to his listening ear, while he only betrayed that he knew there was cause for fear by a momentary look of listening attention if any sound were heard in the street; but Geneviève's heart leaped even if the baby woke and cried, or the fire crackled, as if it would choke her.

Morning found them still uncertain what to do, although it was already full time the two men were gone, if they hoped to leave the house unobserved.

Geneviève looked ghastly with anxiety and sleeplessness as she stood in the chill dawn, and the priest had a deep furrow of anxiety on his brow, but to the Vicomte night appeared really to have brought counsel.

"Fie, what dismal looks!" he said, as he woke all at once, quite fresh and gay, and saw their troubled faces. "Is there ill news?"

Père Thomas smiled a little. "Nothing fresh," he said; "we are where we were last night; neither of us has been able to see what the next step is to be."

"For me? Oh, my good friends, set your minds at rest then. I have dreamed of an excellent plan. You tell me no one will be allowed to leave the city, but that any one may enter. Very well, I shall go to the gate on the Paris road, where our kind besiegers tumbled those great masses of masonry about, watch my opportunity, come up in sight of the sentinel when his attention has been occupied by some one, or he is just turning round on his beat, stand just on the boundary line in the breach, and ask innocently whether those who come into Lyons to-day will be allowed to leave it in the evening. You see my plan?"

"No, monsieur; surely he would arrest you at once."

"But why? He will answer in the negative, I conclude, and then I shall remark that in this case it will certainly not suit me to enter. He will not know from which direction I have come, and I shall walk calmly out. A magnificent plan!"

"A mad one," said Père Thomas, while Geneviève

looked with consternation to see what he thought of it; "but I can suggest no better."

"Assuredly not. I would wager a thousand livres, if I still had them, that it succeeds. Pity Armand de Ligny is not here to profit by it too."

"It is only too dangerous for one. We must go; neither you nor I can afford to linger."

"But, monsieur, take what food you can with you; you may need it all before you reach a place of safety," said Geneviève, greatly startled by the audacity of the scheme, yet unable to think of anything less foolhardy.

"I may indeed, since I have not the least idea where or when that will be," he answered with his careless laugh.

"And you, Father?"

"I remain in the city," answered Père Thomas; "my place is here."

"Shall I see you again?" she asked wistfully.

He shook his head. "We must leave that to God, my daughter. It would compromise you too gravely were I recognised, and your husband will soon return. But I shall remember you in my prayers. Vicomte, your disguise is a poor one for this scheme."

"Let me put one arm in a sling, monsieur," said Geneviève, "and wrap up the fingers, and you must try to soil the other hand—you must indeed."

The Vicomte smiled and let her do as she would.

"You ought to have a cloak of some kind," said the priest, looking at him critically; "the carmagnole does

not look as if you were used to wear it. With a stoop of the shoulders and a cloak—Is there none here?”

There was one which belonged to Vaudès, and Geneviève foresaw future difficulties if she gave it away. “It is my husband’s,” she said in a low voice to Père Thomas.

“That cannot be helped; you must find some explanation to give him. This is no time for hesitation about trifles.”

It was no trifle in Geneviève’s eyes, but she obeyed at once, and the Vicomte wrapped himself in it with a good deal of gaiety and enjoyment, as if this masquerading were not without a certain charm for him. It seemed strange to see such careless spirits in one who had lost family and fortune, and lived with a shameful death hanging over his head, only to be avoided by exile; but there were many of his type. Geneviève might wonder, but it did not surprise Père Thomas, himself of good family, and well acquainted with the noblesse, in the least.

“The child is asleep,” said the Vicomte as he rose and looked round for the cradle. “I thought I heard her cry once or twice in the night, but I slept like a *loir*. What luxury to have a chair to sleep on by a fire! I slept in a warehouse the night before last, and in a ruined church before that, and it rained and hailed. Farewell, my kind hostess: I gladly leave my dear little niece in your keeping, till no distant day, I imagine, Perhaps then I may be able to show my

gratitude as I would. Do not let her forget that her mother was a La Tremblaye, and her father was a Roche Hugon. Poor Edmond! Farewell, madame!"

He bowed to Geneviève courteously, stooped to kiss the baby's forehead, and left the house with Père Thomas, who paused an instant to give Geneviève his blessing. It comforted her, but she was full of apprehension. Even if he reached the gate unobserved, she could not believe that the rash scheme of M. de la Tremblaye could succeed, and then, if it did, and he ever returned to claim the child, what troubles might not arise! But perhaps he would never return; there were so many chances against it; and then she started with horror at the thought which had glanced through her mind. Was it possible that she was actually hoping for his death? But how could she ever face Vaudès if he should at any time discover that she had harboured an aristocrat and a priest!

She watched all through that day in great anxiety, expecting that Mère Allard would come in, as she often did, full of news, which she had an especial gift for picking up. She would be sure to hear of it if any remarkable event had taken place, such as the arrest of a well-known priest of strong royalist opinions, like Père Thomas, or of an officer in the volunteer regiment, like the Vicomte; but although she came, it was only to see the baby, and hear what had passed at Les Récluses, and she talked of little but her satisfaction that Geneviève should have followed her advice, and

her certainty that it would bring her good luck. She had nothing to tell of general interest, nor did any particular news seem to be stirring in the town, and Geneviève was obliged to believe that the Vicomte's madcap plan had succeeded.

It seemed a good omen; and Père Thomas must be for the moment safe too, in spite of the Argus watch kept for him. Unlike the Vicomte, he was prudent as well as bold, and he had devoted friends in the city. Geneviève hoped that she might meet him again, or that he would find means to send her a message, but she hoped in vain. He would not draw her into needless risk, gladly as she would have incurred it for the sake of a few comforting and strengthening words from him, and no suspicion got abroad that the roof of Jacques Vaudès had sheltered a noble and a priest, and although more than one domiciliary visit was made in the very house which Geneviève occupied, the warning given by Barré effectually protected her, and personally she was never disquieted.

CHAPTER IV.

GENEVÈVE'S life was the more lonely that she had moved only a few weeks before her baby's birth to the part of the town where she now lived, partly induced to do so by the wish to be near Mère Allard, whom she had known all her life, and who had stood by her kindly when she came back to Lyons penniless, during her husband's imprisonment. The news that Vaudès was the heir of his great-uncle came after this move, and though it made a very great difference in their plans and prospects, there had not yet been time to obtain any money, and it was most undesirable to arouse envy by letting it be generally known. Only to her old neighbour did Geneviève tell any particulars, but something of the truth had to be explained, or Vaudès would hardly have obtained a passport to leave Lyons, so jealous were the authorities, and so little freedom was there in this time when liberty was in every one's mouth. Beyond Mère Allard, Geneviève had made no friends, scarcely even an acquaintance. She had been too weak and ill before and after her child's birth to

care to do so, or to leave the house unless obliged to go out, and it was no time for comfortable friendly intercourse. Her mother was out of reach, even had Geneviève desired to summon her, and her other relations lived quite on the other side of the city, and they held Vaudès and his politics in aversion, so that she had little in common with them. Her baby's birth and death were equally unimportant in this new neighbourhood, where people hardly knew her name, and perhaps hardly even realised that she was the wife of that Jacques Vaudès who had become a leader in the Jacobin councils, for Vaudès had been away from home almost from the time of their coming to this quarter. Geneviève was glad to know this; she shrank from being pointed out as Vaudès' wife—Vaudès the Montagnard. As for the child, the neighbours vaguely knew that one had been carried away from that house and buried, but to which family it belonged among those who inhabited the different flats no one asked or cared. There were far more exciting and important things to think about, and no attention was aroused by the arrival of the little *Espérance*.

Geneviève's nervous flutter lest some questions should be asked or wonder expressed began to subside; the child thrived and occupied her, and she felt less solitary. When she had to go for her ration of bread she left her with Mère Allard, who was very willing to undertake the charge of her, on condition that Geneviève took her *bon* as well as her own. It was no more trouble to

present two orders than one, and spared Mère Allard, who was elderly, though still brisk and alert, a good deal of fatigue and time.

Already in the week during which Geveviève had had her the child had visibly grown and prospered, and so Geneviève was thinking as she held it on her lap, and played with its little hands and feet, and talked baby nonsense to it. The door opened rather slowly, some one stood in the opening; she started up. "Jacques!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, my poor girl, I have come back. Ah!" he cried, his sad and weary face flushing into joy and sweetness, "the child! our child! Cantal told me. Oh, my dear, good little wife! my little child!"

He was on his knees before her, with his arms round them both, trembling, kissing the baby hands, the little face, the rosy feet, embracing his wife, beside himself with rapture. He did not see how white and cold Geneviève had turned, nor noticed how little response she made to his ecstasy. The words which she was trying to speak died on her quivering lips.

"I got your dear letter, telling me of the little one's birth," he went on, rising, but standing and looking at the child on her knees as if he could never look enough, "and it went to my heart not to have been with you in your trouble, my dear,"—each intonation of his rich and expressive voice was like a caress,—“but you know how public matters held me in Paris, though my heart was here, and drew me after it; and then the very day

I went to take my place in the *coche*, Cantal, just arrived, chanced to see me, and in the middle of all sorts of news about the city he told me"—Vaudès' dark face turned very pale as he spoke—"told me that—that the baby had died."

"Cantal said so! How did he know—anything? Is he coming back here?"

"No, he came with other recruits to Paris, on his way to the frontier. He must have heard some lying story, or perhaps a child did die in this house, and it came out of that."

"Yes," said Geneviève in a faltering voice, and looked at him irresolutely. She knew that now was the time to tell him the truth, but her courage altogether failed her. He was so glad, so happy, so loving; she had never anticipated this, and it was too hard, too cruel to make him suffer as he had once already done, when he heard the ill news in Paris; how could she dash his joy to the ground and anger him, when it seemed as if the blissful time had come again when their boy was born, and nothing had come between them! For the moment all those traces of care and toil, of hardship and fierce resentment, which the last years had deeply printed on Vaudès' thin dark features were effaced by the exquisite joy and surprise which had met him when he opened the door. He was again the young husband of eight years ago; she could almost have believed him just come back to her from one of his perilous journeys, gay with the sense of danger escaped, and enchanted to

be with her again. His very dress lent itself to the illusion, for his carmagnole of *bure*, his long gaiters, and heavy nailed shoes were just such as he had worn in the days when he had gone from village to village, only he no longer carried on his back his large basket with its forbidden wares hidden under the pious books which he despised and hated, but was forced to carry round as an excuse for his trade. Geneviève had never seen him look as he did now since those days so full of happiness and anxieties and mutual interests, had never since then felt herself so close and dear to him.

"How can I tell him! how can I tell him! I must wait; I will do it by-and-by," she kept saying to herself; and just then Mère Allard came in, and started at the sight of Vaudès, and then when with joyous triumph he called her attention to the child, she nodded and smiled significantly to Geneviève, whose heart felt like a stone. She almost hated Mère Allard at that moment.

"Eh! eh! I thought you would be pleased," said she, chuckling. "Yes, I told your wife here you would be well contented when you came back and saw what a pretty present we had here waiting for you. As nice a baby as heart could wish, *hein?* and just like its father, eh! eh!—any one can see that."

She chuckled till she almost choked herself, and had to cough for some minutes before she could go on, while Geneviève turned angrily away.

"And now you must take care of this little mother,

citizen Vaudès, if you want the child to thrive. No more fretting and pining and sitting neglected at home, you understand. Even a man has sense enough to comprehend that, I suppose."

"Quite right, Mère Allard," said Vaudès, forgetting his usual dislike to the old neighbour, whose tongue never spared him, and he looked with tender solicitude at Geneviève's wan face, to which a hot flush mounted and burned painfully. "A man learns what a home with a good little wife is worth when he comes back from his travels. You know I have been in Paris, neighbour."

"Ay, ay, I know. Fine doings there, we hear."

"That there are. Ah, my little daughter, you are born in a well-starred time; the reign of oppression and tyranny is over; every Frenchman henceforward will have his just rights, and hold up his head fearlessly. France is free!"

"Oh, are the nobles and clergy to be allowed to return?" exclaimed Geneviève eagerly.

She said it in perfect innocence, but Vaudès turned upon her as if he had been stung.

"Return! Yes, when they have learned their lesson and admit the sovereignty of the people; it would be treason to liberty to permit it otherwise. Tolerance is good for times of calm, but when public liberty is attacked, to pardon the crime is to share it."

"I do not know how the priests have attacked public liberty," said Geneviève, moved out of her usual timid silence, and regardless of a push from Mère Allard.

"There is no tyranny like that of the priest," retorted Vaudès. "The priest takes a man in the cradle, and does not loose him even in the tomb. No priest will learn that tiara and diadem and censer must yield to law and the will of the people. You speak of tolerance; what tolerance have the priests ever shown? Where can you find more implacable enemies of liberty? Look at the cohorts of ecclesiastics, who formerly were only known for their luxury and uselessness, and now are only known by their fury and hatred of reform. They urge emigration, they plot in the country and out of it. 'Bring in foreign troops,' they cry; 'plunge all France into blood so long as we recover our privileges.' That is their creed. Could demons preach otherwise?"

He had grown strongly excited as he spoke; it was easy to understand how such eloquent gesticulation, such fiery language, coloured by a vivid southern imagination, would tell in the tribune.

"If there are some guilty, there are more innocent," said Geneviève, stung to courage.

"Innocent! innocent! All these counter-revolutionaries hang together. Have we not proof enough in the actions of the *émigrés*, spurred on, as we all know, by the priests? How often have we heard it asserted formerly in the National Assembly that the ecclesiastics and *émigrés* had no designs against their country, and that when positive proof could be brought forward it would be time enough to punish. Certainly they are not lacking, these proofs; but if we had waited for them

where should we be now? If the Romans had waited for proofs when Cicero denounced Catiline, their city would have been sacked, and Catiline would have reigned over her ruins, with liberty under his feet; and had we——”

“Come, come,” interposed Mère Allard, stopping him with a smart tap on the arm, “you are not at the club, citizen; and you, my girl, would do better to give your husband a good supper after his journey than to wrangle. Wrangling is poor food and makes bad blood, and the baby will not thrive on it; mind that, both of you.”

“Yes, yes; henceforward I shall always have my mouth stopped with the baby,” said Vaudès, but his sudden, stormy anger had cooled at this appeal, and he smiled the peculiarly sweet southern smile which lent a singular charm to his dark countenance, and kissed the cold and unresponsive lips of Geneviève affectionately.

“In any case we have this in common,” he said, laying his slender brown hand softly and protectingly on the infant, and Mère Allard nodded again in a triumphant manner at Geneviève.

“Give him the child while you set the table,” said she, and when Geneviève hesitated, giving her a pained and reproachful look, she took the baby from her, and put it into the arms of Vaudès.

“There, that is as it should be,” she said.

Geneviève rose slowly, feeling as if her husband’s words had bruised her all over. Her short dream of happiness had been rudely broken; he was again in

her eyes the persecutor and blasphemer, at war with the Church, virtually excommunicated. It was not wonderful that she could not understand how to Vaudès the state religion, the only one he knew, seemed one with superstition and tyranny, and that the thirst for truth and liberty so strong in the man impelled him at all costs to clear the ground of it. It was the unhappy fate of thousands in France at that time to see in Christianity the ally of despotism and falsehood, and to believe it what men had made it, without asking if this was what its Founder intended. To Geneviève it was not this summoning of Christianity to the bar, but the revolt against the Church which was so dreadful. It could not be otherwise with a woman of her character, entirely under the influence of a man like Père Thomas. Mère Allard's next words made her stop and look round.

"There, I will take myself off," she was saying. "Adieu. Are you going to stay now you have come back at last, citizen Vaudès?"

"Only for as short a time as possible;" and then, as Geneviève uttered a sound half relief, half dismay, "You see I ought to go to Valentré; there will be difficulties about some little matters there unless I am on the spot." The Republicans had not yet by any means developed the doctrine that private property was a crime against humanity, and Vaudès had a true Celtic joy in finding himself the owner of a piece of land. "I dare say my wife has told you all about it,

though the less talk there is the better, you understand."

"Ay, ay, I know that; be easy, citizen. A vineyard, is there not?"

"And a farm, it seems. A strange man, my uncle, and a usurer, more's the pity. It must be our endeavour to set some of the wrong he did right, *mon amie*," said Vaudès, turning to Geneviève, and his face kindled at the thought.

"Yes," she answered, languidly.

"Had he lived a little longer I expect his house would have been pulled down about his ears, and no doubt it would have served him right for grinding the faces of the poor, but his apparent poverty protected him, it would seem," Vaudès went on.

"Ay, we all know how usurers make their money," said Mère Allard viciously. "A poor man borrows to buy a little pig, and never can save enough to pay the loan back, and then the usurer comes for his interest, and one must scrape and spare and pinch from quarter day to quarter day to pay it, and somehow the sum is always rolling up, and one shakes in one's shoes before him, and maybe after all the pig dies, and there you are with nothing to show for all you have spent, and the debt always running on. Yes, yes, they may well say a pig bought with borrowed money always grunts."

"Just so; that was the way all round us," said Vaudès, his face darkening at the recollection.

"And everywhere else. So you are going directly!

But there will be matters to settle first here, furniture to sell—what do I know!”

“I could settle everything and follow you,” said Geneviève, with a great longing to get away from Lyons.

“Could you?” he answered, much surprised at her alacrity. “It would be well, for I could ill spare the time and money to return; but there is a good deal to look to, and you are not strong, and such a journey alone for you and the baby——”

Geneviève looked at the child with a quick pang of jealousy. She thought Vaudès would have been less anxious had she been about to face the journey and its risks without his child in her arms.

“It would be best so; I can manage it all. I have had to take care of myself before now,” she answered with a faint tone of resentment in her voice, “and you need not lose more time.”

“Ay, go and look to your inheritance; the little one will want a dowry one of these days,” laughed Mère Allard, and Vaudès looked down at the infant with the tender sweetness which made his sad and grave face beautiful.

Mère Allard went, and Geneviève set food before him, with an unspoken thought of that other supper for a weary traveller which she had prepared a few nights before. A sense of guilt and apprehension weighed on her, as well as what had passed just now. Vaudès, who was keenly sensitive to the moods of those

around him, quickly perceived something of it, and attributed it all to what he had said.

"*Mon amie*, what shall we call our little girl?" he asked, anxious to cheer her, and to restore the sense of harmony which had been very sweet to him as well as to her.

"I—I should like her to be called *Espérance*."

"*Espérance*! a good name," he answered, well pleased. "*Espérance* it shall be, and may all our hopes for her be fulfilled."

Geneviève was pleased too, and her face cleared. The child would have the name which her mother had chosen, and by which she had been christened.

"Little *Espérance*," Vaudès said, touching her cheek softly with his finger, and seeing in vision a millennium of peace and brotherly love and even-handed justice beyond that sea of blood which lay between him and it, and as she opened her eyes he looked intently into them, while his eyes glistened, and he said in a low voice, "They are like the boy's."

"I—I do not know; his were blacker, like yours," Geneviève answered faintly, and again she thought she would tell him the truth, and found she had not courage. She had been on the point of doing it when she was so grieved and angry half an hour before; it had seemed easy then, but she could not do it now. He talked little after that, but kept the child on his knee, looking at it earnestly from time to time, and she saw that Mère Allard was right; if they had had a child it

would have made home dear to him, even though they might differ over everything else. How hard it was !

Perhaps it was almost as unwelcome to Vaudès as to Geneviève when presently Barré came in, with his loud voice and swagger, all wet with rain and full of insolent importance as usual, eager to learn the last news from Paris, and to carry off Vaudès to speak at the club and report what he had seen and heard. It was with a rebuke in his voice that he observed that Vaudès ought to have done this without waiting to be summoned, and even a man like Vaudès, high as he stood among the Jacobin party, could not disregard such a remark, but it was chiefly to spare Geneviève, who, as he well knew, detested Barré and his politics, that he rose to go at once. She did not guess it, and only felt that it was cruel he should be ready to quit her when he had hardly arrived.

"Take the child, *mon amie*," he said, as he stood up. "I will go to the club for an hour or two, and tell citizen Barré the news as we walk there. Here is my excuse for delay, citizen ; I had not yet seen her ; she was born in my absence. This is a child of the Revolution," he added, smiling, as he used the name commonly given to children born in those stormy times, and holding it out for Barré to see. Geneviève abhorred him so much that she could hardly help snatching it away, even though it was not her own child. He nodded and cast an indifferent glance on the baby.

"Public business before private affairs, citizen. Are

you ready? I have not seen you since we met in the Place Bellecour, citoyenne," he said, turning to Geneviève. "You remember, eh? A good patriot, your wife, friend Vaudès."

"So my wife ought to be," answered Vaudès, smiling, but with a quick glance from one to the other which might have betrayed to a keener observer his fear lest this should be spoken in irony, and mean mischief. He was both relieved and astonished to find it was spoken in good faith, and that Barré was regarding Geneviève with approval; but how she had come into the Place Bellecour, and how she could have entertained Barré there, perplexed him greatly.

"You looked rosier that day than to-night," pursued Barré; "we were all saying that your absence agreed with your wife, citizen Vaudès; I cannot say as much for your return," and he gave a laugh which grated on both hearers, while Geneviève took the baby, and bent over it to hide her face. "Did you get your business done at Les Récluses?"

"Yes," murmured Geneviève.

"Les Récluses!" repeated Vaudès sharply.

"Some errand to La Michaude, was it not? Would you believe it, citizen, that ass Marius Papinaud wanted to put your wife under surveillance because he had seen her talking with some one in the morning—a *notable*, he declared. Who was it, citoyenne?"

"Only an old neighbour. Shall I fetch him for you to see, citizen?"

"No, no, it is all right. I silenced the fellow's babble sharply enough, I promise you. An ass, I say, a mole, who lets a marked man like the *ci-devant* La Tremblaye slip through his fingers, though we had certain intelligence that he was back in the city—and then wants to make capital out of the wife of a man like Jacques Vaudès!"

"La Tremblaye back here! Is that certain?"

"As certain as that the statue of Reason stands in La Fourrière."

"What can have brought him?"

"Some plot, that is certain, without asking."

"Stay, was not a sister of his among those Belle Cise women who were taken to Les Récluses?"

"It is not that which brought him; she is shaved by the national razor."

"Impossible! she was reprieved; the Republic does not kill its unborn children."

"There was a child, I believe, and then she went off with the others one day," said Barré, carelessly. He did not know that although the name of Alix de la Tremblaye had been placed on the list of victims, fever had forestalled the guillotine.

"Ah!" said Vaudès, struck with pity, though they were speaking of an aristocrat; "and the infant?"

"Sent to the Maternity House, I suppose. One of a bad brood; if I had my way none should be brought up of the whole lot of them. That was not a patriotic act of yours, Jacques Vaudès, when you got those

women away from Belle Cise, and it has done you no good with our party. I have heard things said about it which—enough; but no more of that, you understand. As for that La Tremblaye, he is a pestilent fellow who will one of these days make a little excursion to Les Brotteaux. There is one who shall not play the old Vicomte his father over again; it is not for nothing that Antoine Godet is my cousin. You must have heard that little story, citoyenne?" turning to Geneviève, who was sitting in a corner where the shadows fell thickly, under pretext of hushing the baby. She dared not trust her voice to answer, but Barré only wanted to talk; he had forgotten his haste to carry Vaudès off to the club.

"You must know the rule on the Vicomte's lands was that any property which a man might own was forfeited to the seigneur at his death unless he had a son living with him at the time," he went on. "There was a little farm which the Vicomte coveted, to throw it into his park, and Godet the elder would not give it up. A century earlier the seigneur would simply have taken it, and no more ado; but now he could not quite do that, even though the seigneurs make the laws. So what does my Vicomte do but get Antoine taken for a soldier just when old Godet begins to fail, and naturally the land lapsed to him. All quite fair and legal, you see. Ha! ha! that was in the good old days when the aristocrats had it all their own way, citoyenne. Pretty times,

H

were they not? Come, friend Vaudès, it grows late."

"I am ready. Stay, my cloak," said Vaudès, going to the door, and listening to the rising wind which drove the rain wildly before it. "A wild night, worse than when I came. My carmagnole is drenched, but I ought to have a cloak somewhere. Where is it, *mon amie*?"

Geneviève all at once recollected what had become of that cloak.

"I—I do not know," she answered hurriedly, and rising as if to look for it.

"Do not know!" repeated Vaudès, in astonishment, and followed her into the next room, doubtful if he had understood her rightly.

There was no such superfluity in his wardrobe or in the meagre furniture of the two rooms as to make it easy to mislay a cloak. Geneviève stood in the middle of the floor, pale and terrified, while he looked hastily round for it.

"I—lent it," she murmured, lifting frightened eyes to him.

"Lent it! to whom?" Vaudès demanded, turning to her, and perceiving how white and shaking she stood there.

"Some one—came—and asked for it one night."

"Came and asked for it one night! How!" he began, and then, commanding his emotion with a great effort, he stood and looked at her, while his swarthy

face, which had grown dark red, turned pale, and became as hard as if cut in stone.

"Yes, I think I understand. We will speak of this by-and-by. I am ready, citizen," he answered to Barré's impatient call from the street. He threw on the carmagnole and stepped out beside his tall companion, whose large figure and great head made the slender make and spare limbs of Vaudès look more remarkable by the contrast. It was easy to see that they were of different races and temperaments.

"If you had not come to seek me to-night I should have gone to you early to-morrow," Vaudès said, forcibly putting away his pre-occupation. "I have had much talk with Danton. There is a man for you! the greatest, the strongest of all the men of the Revolution. If the Gironde could see where their true interest lies."

"*Tête bleue!* do not talk to me of those accursed Moderates," shouted Barré, with scant ceremony. "I am a Montagnard, and you too, I hope, citizen Vaudès; no half-measures for me, and as for your Girondists——"

They plunged into politics as they walked towards the club, where Vaudès was received with eagerness, and listened to with attention which might have aroused a dangerous jealousy in Barré, had he not considered the triumph as shared by himself, since it was he who had fetched the orator on whose words they hung. Vaudès was pre-eminently an orator. Stirred to the heart himself by what he was saying, he stirred others, carrying them away, but never so carried away

himself as not to have an immense force in reserve; and he had the facile eloquence of the south, the picturesque diction, and vigorous imagery, together with a rich and flexible voice, capable of expressing every shade of emotion. The National Assembly had listened to him with the same attention as did his Lyonnais audience, and he was one of the most popular deputies sent up to Paris. While he spoke at the club he forgot the explanation which he should have to demand on his return home; everything not of public interest had for the time passed from his mind; but Geneviève had nothing to distract her thoughts, nor would the most absorbing national events have for a moment made her forget what must come by-and-by. She sat in shivering expectation and alarm. The truth must all come out now, owned because she could not help it, and Vaudès would never forgive her. Or perhaps she need not tell quite all? Perhaps Heaven would have pity on her, and spare that necessity, and she took out the rosary which she secretly wore, and murmured prayer after prayer. The baby woke and cried; she fed it and rocked it to sleep again in the cradle. Vaudès would never pardon her having brought it here. Yet there had been pity in his voice when he alluded to it. How strange that he should have done so this evening! The fire died down, and her courage seemed to die with it; she had no heart to rise and put more wood on it, or to remove the remains of supper; she just sat still in a trance of ever-increasing

apprehension, waiting for Vaudès' return, though she felt in such a fever of alarm that she could have rushed out of the house, to Mère Allard, to her relations, into the Saône, anywhere, if only she could get away.

Late at night Vaudès returned. She heard his footsteps in the street, and felt as if each were planted on her heart, and she shrank as she caught the glitter of his eyes as he entered. His first fury was over, but she feared even more what she called his *colère blanche*, and she knew what fiery anger lay below this apparent calm.

"Well?" he said.

She could find no reply. He came a step nearer; his eyes sent out a flash of light like the gleam of a poniard through their long black lashes.

"Papinaud was right then? You have been sheltering an aristocrat in my house—during my absence? helping him to escape?"

"Yes," she murmured inaudibly.

"In my house! Jacques Vaudès' house! You, my wife, the wife of a man whose life has been ruined by these aristocrats, whose child died owing to the treatment we met with at their hands! whose whole strength has been poured out to root up their evil race, and whose name as a patriot and a Republican has never had a stain on it—you have done this! Who was the man?"

"M. de la Tremblaye."

She had a faint hope that she might avoid betraying that Père Thomas had been there too.

"Perfect! M. de la Tremblaye, the son of one of the worst-lived, most arrogant, most pitiless of all the nobles of France, a man who lived only for his pleasure, and whose pleasure cost the misery of hundreds. M. de la Tremblaye! *ma foi!* it was well done—you could not have chosen better!"

"What could I do?" she faltered, shrinking as if the torrent of words had been a lash. "He came unasked by me; I did no more than give him a night's lodging; I do not know what became of him the next day. How could I refuse? He is not responsible for his father's sins, Jacques. Would you then have had me shut my door and give him up to the guillotine?"

"He did not come here unsent. Who assured him of a refuge here?" demanded Vaudès, suddenly and sharply.

"It was—Père Thomas, I think."

"Excellent! Père Thomas! Of course he knew he could count on you, knew I was absent, knew the very day I should return, no doubt. These *calotins* still know everything that passes in our houses," said Vaudès, quivering with indignation. "And you met this La Tremblaye on your way to Les Récluses, when Papinaud saw you, and settled it all apparently."

Geneviève made no answer, she was almost too terrified to speak, and it seemed safer to let Vaudès think this than to heighten his anger, if indeed it could be heightened, by owning anything more.

"So that was it! And now be so kind as to tell me

what that little journey to Les Récluses, of which Barré spoke, had to do with all this. What message were you carrying? Whom were you going to visit? Answer me."

"Oh, no one, nothing. I only took some work which Mère Allard had been doing back to La Michaude. Mère Allard begged me to do it; she sent me. You can ask her, Jacques."

"What would be the good of that?" asked Vaudès, with bitter contempt; "women and priests never hesitate to deceive an honest man, and they always succeed. How could I know their shifts and wiles and cases of conscience? One thing is clear to me; the wife of Jacques Vaudès shall not bring disgrace upon his name; nor play in the hands of traitors and enemies of the country. We must part."

"Part!" she repeated, looking up at him with wide-open eyes of terror.

"We must part, I tell you. We have taken two ways that go in contrary directions, and I will have no one under my roof and claiming to belong to me who shelters aristocrats, who holds with the *prétraille*, who plays false to France; if it were my own heart which I found turning traitor thus I would tear it out of my breast. We must part, I say."

"Oh, no, no," she moaned, dropping at his feet, and holding up her clasped hands in agony. "Think how you used to love me! have pity on me! Oh, strike me, punish me, do anything you like to me, but not that, not that, Jacques."

"All I am and have and can give and spend is my country's," he answered, with harsh vehemence. "We must part, I tell you."

"I keep this then," she cried, suddenly snatching up the baby from the cradle, and holding it up between him and her as if it were a shield in this dire moment. "The child is mine. Will you send me away now?"

Startled by the hasty movement, the child awoke and began to cry loudly, and she clasped and soothed it, keeping her eyes on him with a sort of passionate defiance.

Vaudès walked hastily up and down the little room, as if he would dash himself against the walls at every turn, muttering to himself, and clenching and unclenching his long, nervous fingers; then he came back and stood watching both, and as he did so and saw the infant gradually hushed, and dropping asleep on Geneviève's breast, his dark face softened and relaxed, the hard lines went out of it, and he sighed deeply, like one exhausted by a great mental struggle.

"Yours and mine," he said mournfully. "Well, let the past go then, there is no more to be said; what is done is done, and no doubt you did what you thought right. I suppose no woman worth the name would refuse an asylum to a fugitive; it was not after all as an aristocrat you gave him shelter, but as a hunted man. Perhaps some day we shall see things alike again, as we used to do."

He turned away and went out of the house, with the

old harassed look on his face which Geneviève knew so well, and she remained weeping over the baby. She could never tell Vaudès the truth now. She had been silent at first because she had not courage to dash his joy; she must be silent henceforth from fear.

CHAPTER V.

To leave Lyons was now Geneviève's strongest wish. She was very thankful that her husband would go almost at once, for who knew what he might learn at any moment? Some chance speech, like that of the acquaintance whom he had met at the last moment in Paris, might reveal everything to him. The few days that he remained in the city were one long terror to her. Every time he came in her eyes searched his face with deadly anxiety to see whether he looked different from usual; every cloud there made her heart sink; every time he appeared pre-occupied, she fancied he was brooding over some suspicion about the child, or Père Thomas, or that he might have been to Les Récluses and heard something from La Michaude. The deception did not weigh at all on her; it was in a good cause, but the dread lest he should discover it almost wore her out. With such deep relief that it was almost happiness she saw him leave the city for Valentré, which was so far off that she could believe it very unlikely he would ever have any special com-

munication with Lyons again, and Cantal was gone to the wars, and would not meet him if his duties as a deputy took him to Paris; certainly there was no fear of Cantal coming to Valentré.

She went about arranging all the many little matters necessitated by their leaving their home, and disposing of such poor furniture as they possessed, and looked to everything with feverish energy, feeling as if each thing settled was so much of the old life got rid of, the life with which she longed to have done, and so much more chance that Vaudès would never discover her secret,—that secret which henceforward she must carry about with her, unshared by the one nearest and dearest to her heart, though known to only too many outsiders, and which would from this time accompany her as closely and inseparably as her shadow, and look her in the face in lonely hours by day, and scare her by its chill touch and reproachful eyes when she lay awake at night. Sometimes she looked at the innocent baby with absolute aversion, and then again she recollected that but for her Vaudès would have sent her away—the infant was the bond that held them together, and she felt a strange mingling of jealousy and pain as she thought of it. He must never know—never.

A nervous dread haunted her lest she should fall ill and tell the truth in delirium, and she took more care of her health than she had ever done in her life. She filled almost every hour with preparations for her departure and journey; but there were times when

she had to sit still with the child, or it woke her in the night, and then troubled thoughts came flocking around her. Each day that brought the moment of leaving Lyons nearer seemed to relieve her. When Mère Allard pitied her for the long, tedious journey in prospect, she inwardly rejoiced to think how far off Valentré was, how difficult was the journey across country, and how unknown the little town appeared to be to every one she knew, for France is a large country, and local feeling was strong, and the inhabitants of different parts took little or no interest in any place beyond their own district. A cousin of Geneviève's had even asked whether she would not have to cross the sea to get to Valentré, and another had thought it was in England, nor was this ignorance of geography by any means confined to the uneducated; a good many of Vaudès' friends, who boasted alike of their patriotism and learning, could not have exactly told where that Dauphiné was situated whose name they were so anxious to abolish.

Valentré appeared to Geneviève a harbour of refuge. She longed to escape from this Lyons, which ever since she came back to it had had none but miserable associations for her; she craved to get away from that Place Bellecour, where so many victims had perished; from the constant sound of the tocsin, giving notice of tumult and danger; from the *rappel*, from her family, who reproached her with Vaudès' political opinions; from Les Récluses, where La Michau de lived,

who knew her secret; from Mère Allard, whose nods and meaning smiles and nudges were unbearable to her; and above all, from herself. She did not yet know that, although she might get away from everything else, she could never leave her own consciousness of what she had done behind.

She sold their little stock of furniture to the best advantage she could, helped by Mère Allard, who proved herself a useful ally; but no one had much money to spare just now, and, besides, the pillage of many rich houses had thrown all kinds of goods and chattels into the second-hand shops. However, Geneviève had a Frenchwoman's practical business power, and had no reason to be discontented with her sale.

Farewell visits had to be paid to her relations, and she found herself received with mingled respect and a sort of incredulous wonder, as having come into a legacy, in so distant a place, however, as to seem rather unreal; and then such a piece of good fortune was so unlike anything they had expected or prophesied of Jacques Vaudès as to be almost beyond belief. Of course she had to take the baby with her, and hear the speculations and assertions as to whom it was like, and which parent it most resembled, which are inevitable in all ages and times on such occasions. No rumour of her own infant's death seemed to have reached them, and this was not wonderful—she had had little fear of that; but she found herself involved in so many equivocations and difficulties that she cut

her visits as short as she could, with the excuse that she had still much to arrange.

As she was going homeward on this last evening, the very thing occurred which she had hoped for in vain; she met Père Thomas. He was so well disguised that she would have passed him without knowing him, had he not slightly moved his hat and given her a glance of recognition. She knew that it was only possible for him to escape detection by perpetual change of costume and domicile, and she was filled with reverent pity for this man, living in constant danger, and risking his life incessantly to minister to such of his flock as were still scattered through Lyons. Probably he was now on his way to some sick person. There were other people going and coming; she could only venture an inquiring look, to which he returned a sign of assent, and she understood that the Vicomte had escaped.

She walked on fast, then slackened her pace, and stopped as if to arrange the shawl around the baby, and as he slowly passed her, she went on too, and said very low and rapidly, "My husband came home angry. I dared not tell."

Père Thomas bent his head and walked on, neither forbidding nor sanctioning what she had done. As before, he left the responsibility to her. In his own mind, the fact that the child of Alix de la Tremblaye, and now the only representative of the ancient family of Roche Hugon, was safely sheltered, and in the

hands of a devout foster-mother, was a great deal more important than the deceit practised on Vaudès, a Jacobin and a heretic. Père Thomas was a good man in his way, nobly self-devoted and earnest, but he would not have hesitated to do a small wrong to insure what he thought a greater good. Geneviève felt that he had not disapproved, and she thought that the meeting had come providentially to reassure her.

It was in the early dawn of the next morning that she left Lyons for her tedious journey, while the city lay silent, and the Saône rolled dark and chill in the faint light. Mère Allard accompanied her to the *coche d'eau*, by which the first stage of the journey would be made, and which was jealously watched by the so-called agents for the public safety, lest any fugitives should get on board. For Geneviève, the well-known name of Vaudès had smoothed the difficulties of leaving the city; he had taken care that she had all the needful passports and papers before he went away himself; but she knew that at every town where she stopped, even for a night, she must show her papers, and probably meet with all manner of trivial delays and vexatious difficulties, and that many of her companions in the travelling conveyances, whether by river or road, would be Jacobins, whose coarse talk and manners were alike odious to her, or spies on the watch for aristocrats, who as likely as not might pretend to take her for one, and stop and harass her, with the hope of a bribe for letting her proceed. Her heart

sank now that the time was really come to encounter these possibilities, and yet she was glad to go, at the price of any discomforts, and turn her face to new scenes and a new life in Valentré.

Vaudès had been born close to Valentré, but he had not been there for years, and Geneviève had never seen it. He had no relations there now; his family had died out, and none of his brothers or sisters had reached middle age. His parents had possessed nothing but debts and children, and were early worn out by labour unsweetened by hope, and when Vaudès married he was alone in the world, and had loved Geneviève all the more that she was the one thing he could feel was all his own. The only member of the family who had been prosperous was the old great-uncle, who had held aloof from them all, and lived as if he were almost a beggar, amassing sou upon sou, and keeping an old curiosity shop, into which many things from the pillaged châteaux of that district had found their way in these last four years. He had been a pawnbroker too, and a usurer, Vaudès believed, and, far from lifting a finger to help any of his family, he had contributed in no small degree to their misfortunes by lending them small sums, and exacting high interest, for which he probably considered he had amply atoned, if indeed it ever struck him that atonement was necessary, by bequeathing all he had to the one relation he had yet remaining, his great-nephew, Jacques Vaudès.

Geneviève sighed to think that what her husband's return would recall to him was not of a nature to soften him, nor to make him less hard upon the seigneurs and the clergy. His family had not suffered more, but rather less perhaps, than thousands of others, but in that lay the pity of it all, and now this great multitude of the oppressed and disinherited had suddenly awakened to a full sense both of their wrongs and of their power, and to a perception of all that their forefathers had endured before them for generations, and they had become tyrants and oppressors in their turn.

It was a gloomy, miserable, hopeless outlook, Geneviève thought, whether the people remained sovereign or the old masters returned to power, and she thought there must be a curse upon a land which had shed "that dark stream of royal blood," and renounced its God. How could anything go well with it? Must it not go from bad to worse, chastised by governments of its own choosing, and drifting further and further from faith? Perhaps the nobles had been very bad, and faith had burned low even before the Revolution; but still France, as a nation, had not then deliberately chosen atheism instead of Christianity. And there Geneviève was right. It was hard to feel her heart grow heavier instead of gladder as she came nearer to Valentré, although she was longing to be with her husband. She had fully expected to be joyful and light-hearted when once she got away from Lyons, and indeed during the first days of her journey she had felt such

relief and freedom from her fears as tided her over all fatigue and difficulties, and made the future seem full of promise. But when she caught sight of her destination, and saw the little town in the distance, rising high on its lofty rocky plateau, with a swift stream coursing round three sides of it as it made its winding way through a deep ravine down to the Garonne, all courage seemed suddenly to leave her; she was only conscious of what a strain the journey had been, and when Vaudès came hurrying in eager delight to meet her and the baby, she could not answer his greeting for tears. He soothed and caressed her, full of anxiety for her, and carried the child in his arms as he took her to their future home.

"Thou hast had much to bear, my poor little wife," he said affectionately, "but all that is over. We have a settled home now, and need not fear the wolf at the door any longer, and we can help to drive it away from that of others, and we are together again, we three,"—he looked with rapturous pride and delight at the infant face nestled against his bosom,—“our troubles are passed.”

Geneviève felt as if they were only beginning.

CHAPTER VI.

VALENTRE had had a stormy history. Even before the Romans came to Gaul there was a Celtic fortress there, which they speedily seized, and left their mark deep on the neighbourhood for all succeeding generations to see, in solid archways and walls and roads made by the legionaries stationed there. The flax which grew in that district had once been sent to Rome to be woven into delicate veils for patrician ladies, and the vines which were the chief riches of the district, and whose produce would form the main source of income which Vaudès derived from his inheritance, had originally been planted by Roman hands. Over the river a towered bridge, seven hundred years old at least, was thrown high above the stream, which in stormy weather came down full and furious from the rocky hills behind, and dashed wildly against the rock upon which the town was built. There was a tradition of a great battle fought on its banks long before the bridge was built, and the spot was still called *Le champ del Morone*. Frank and Saracen met there in hand-to-hand fight;

the invaders conquered and held the town and neighbourhood until after the battle of Tours; and although from that time they were gradually driven out, they left their stamp even more ineffaceably than the Romans had done, for all the water used in the town and the neighbouring vineyards came from the wells which they had dug, and the swarthy skins, slender frames, and vivid dark eyes of many families told unmistakably of Arab blood.

There were mediæval associations too. Valentré claimed to have had the paladin Roland for its seigneur, and at all events his sword Durandal was sculptured on the door of its chief church, with King Arthur's Escalibur to keep it company; and its mitred abbot was a very great man indeed, who, when he officiated on high days, had the right of laying on the altar helm and cuirass, in token that he was not only a spiritual ruler, but also a great temporal one.

Whoever attempted to rule Valentré had need to have a strong hand, for time out of mind it had been a sort of little republic and stronghold of free burgesses, and even when cruel persecution fell on it in the evil days of the unfortunate Raymond of Toulouse, it still maintained its rights against its abbot. Vaudès knew all this, and knew too that his family had been among the free citizens, and were among those to whom the hardest measures had been dealt, and doubtless such traditions had greatly moulded his character and conduct. As a boy he had been noticed by one of the

priests in Valentré, who was struck with his intelligence and thoughtfulness, and got him instructed for a time in a monastery, with the idea of transferring him later to a seminary; but though the lad eagerly absorbed all the teaching he could get, he revolted against the submission of will and intellect which was required of the scholars, and his masters recognised the untamable, dangerous spirit within him, and let him leave the school, wherein he was becoming a power—a power for evil, they said, a born heretic. He was without money or protectors, already marked out as discontented and dangerous, and he did not know where to turn. Just then he chanced to fall in with a Calvinist colporteur, who took him as his companion, and thenceforward his fate was fixed; but by nature he would have chosen a settled life and a home, for, restless and vehement as he seemed, he had a great need of affection and of some one to love. He often thought of his birthplace, and now that he so unexpectedly returned there, it was with a sense of taking his rightful place. His forefathers had lived there, and had a stake in its welfare and a hand in the government of the brave little town; no one else might remember this, but Vaudès could never forget it.

It was with exultation that he saw the changes since his time. The great monastery was turned into public offices, the churches were closed, the convents open, the posts which had been filled by royal officials abolished, or given to new men. It seemed to him that for the

first time he could breathe freely in Valentré, now that these things were gone which to him represented a great burden of hypocrisy and tyranny. The air seemed clearer now that they were done away with. Vaudès was far from denying that there was a God, but he could not see Him in any of these things, nay, they actually hid Him from him, and he was so intensely occupied in trying to help his fellow-men in the way which seemed to him best, so earnest in seeking to improve the world in which he lived, that he could hardly look beyond, or feel the need of anything more.

"We too have our soldiers, our apostles, our martyrs," he would say; "we live not for reward in this world or the next, if there be one, but to realise an ideal which we find in our conscience. Our reward is such little good as we are able to do."

It was a noble ideal, and it was not his fault if he did not know that Christianity would have been the first to acknowledge it so. His upright, moral life was almost a stumbling-block to Geneviève; she could not understand how it could exist without belief in what to her exclusively represented religion. Vaudès was not worse, but a great deal better, than many devout people whom she knew. Père Thomas used to shrug his shoulders when she ventured to tell him so, but she knew that it was the fact, knew also, with a certain shrinking, how sternly truthful Vaudès was, and how utterly his lightest word might be trusted. She did not think truth so very necessary, at all events for

women, to whom life was apt to be very difficult. Père Thomas had never insisted on it, but involuntarily she revered, while fearing it, such perfect sincerity as her husband's. He seemed terrible to her now that she had come back to him with a secret lying between them—and such a secret! and his entire unconsciousness of it both relieved and stung her.

In these first days he was never tired of telling her with what happy impatience he had been awaiting her, and how joyful he was to have a comfortable home for wife and child; there would be no more pinching and sparing, there would be enough for them, and much to spare for those who needed it as they had done. It seemed a beautiful, glad coincidence to Vaudès, who had something childlike in his nature, that this prosperity should have come to him just when a new era was opening for France. In that red dawn he saw not the crimson of blood and crime, as Geneviève did, but the rising sun of liberty, which should shine on a day when every man would have an equal chance of a fair start in life. He had all sorts of plans for the future, and visited his vineyard and farm, and surveyed the contents of his dwelling, with almost a child's interest.

The ground floor only was his; like many houses in Valentré, it belonged to more than one owner; the upper rooms were empty. Evidently it had belonged at one time to some noble owner, who perhaps had lived there when not at his country-house, in days when the

noblesse did not think it needful to spend their time and money in Paris. There was a weathercock surmounting the steep roof, and only a noble was allowed to have one, and a coat of arms had been carved over the oaken door, black with age and studded with square-headed nails. It had been mutilated and defaced in some popular tumult, but the lilies of Saldanhac might still be distinguished there. Many of the rooms were wainscotted breast high, and above the wainscot were hangings of embossed leather, and the ceilings of some were painted. It was a fine old house, with nothing bourgeois about it, and Valentré was altogether a picturesque old town, with many such mansions, mostly turned into shops, often with other stories projecting over the lower, supported by wooden pillars with richly-carved capitals, and dark depths within which, like a spider in his web, the shopkeepers sat waiting for custom. On market days they made a great display of their wares on counters in front of the shops, and there was a stir in the town, but it had grown still and poor for a long while, and the Revolution had made it more so. On the whole the Revolution was not popular in Valentré, perhaps because they had had considerable liberty there; they did like other places, and sacked the château a league distant, and closed the churches, but at bottom the inhabitants were mostly antirepublican, as Vaudès by-and-by found. Still, even here the waves of the great storm yet heaved sullenly, and Bonaparte had not yet appeared to reduce anarchy

to order, and bring back trade and wealth to the shaken country.

Vaudès looked with perplexed amusement on the contents of the old curiosity shop. The shrewd business instincts which ran through all his visionary theories made him unwilling to resign the profit to be made out of its contents, whether great or small, but he could not spare time or thoughts for arranging them. Geneviève would take it in hand, he said, and reduce this chaos to order; she had a good head for business matters.

It was a chaos. There were rags which once had been silk and velvet, there were swords and pistols, china bowls with a handful of coins or a rosary thrown into them, silver sconces which had lighted ball-rooms, Venetian mirrors which had reflected beauties at their toilette, portraits, tapestry rolled up, piles of bolts and bars and iron work wrenched off by rude hands who could tell whence? Coats of the date of Louis Treize, and wigs worn at the court of Louis Quatorze, hung near a battle-axe which perhaps had gone to the Crusades with St. Louis; halberds were piled up behind a heap of rainbow-hued painted glass from some church; boxes full of dresses blocked another corner; a picture or two, blistered with sun and wind, hung outside the shop. What stories of crime and misfortune, deserved and undeserved, these things might have told if they had had tongues! Many had been accumulated year by year by old Luc Vaudès, bought for a trifle or pledged and never redeemed, but a great number must

have been sold by aristocrats when money failed them in the present troubles, or brought by peasants after the sack of some house, or else bought from the public executioner, with whom probably the old pawnbroker had a contract for the clothes of all who fell under the axe of the guillotine. For a while it had been very busy, when the deputy Carrier was spending a few weeks in that district, and there were brocaded coats, satin and muslin dresses, with red stains which would never wash out, tumbled in a heap in a corner and covered with dust. Geneviève found them one day, and recoiled in shuddering horror. The meaning of many of the articles around her revealed itself to her after that, and she took a morbid pleasure in trying to make out to whom they belonged, and which had been the property of nobles, dead or exiled. She made histories out of them, and as little Espérance grew older, she would throw a gold chain round her neck when Vaudès was not there, or give her a string of pearls to play with, or make her a little frock out of those stores which never seemed to come to an end, while she inwardly wondered whether these things had belonged to any family to whom the child might be related. She never could forget the little one's rank.

Not only her secret knowledge about Espérance, but the sense that she was of noble birth, put a barrier between the child and herself. She gave her dutiful and assiduous care, treating her with grave gentleness, but it was the cold and timid kindness of an inferior;

not the hearty, matter-of-course love of a mother. There was an odd sense of having wronged her in her mind, though she knew the baby would probably have died had she not taken it. Very soon the little one seemed to have a curious perception that the feeling of Geneviève was but "kindness counterfeiting absent love," for as soon as she could notice anything she would turn from her and hold out her arms to Vaudès, who adored her. The moment he came in sight the little face glowed with smiles, the little feet danced with impatience to go to him; she would struggle out of Geneviève's arms to his, and sit triumphant on his shoulder, or shriek with delight as he held her aloft and then caught her to his breast and devoured her with kisses. Every time he did so was like a stab to Geneviève, whose lips would quiver and her heart feel as if a grip were laid on it. She never got used to it; Vaudès' passionate love for the child was a continual reproach to her.

Had Espérance shown her the same spontaneous affection which she did to Vaudès, perhaps her foster-mother might have felt differently, but in any case she would have loved her husband much better than her children, and Espérance remained only her nursling, a stranger whom she was bound to tend and serve, but who did not move her cold and quiet nature to any warmth. But to Vaudès she was his heart's blossom, she never seemed in his way; if she were ailing he watched over her untiringly; if she were well his heart

was light. As soon as she could walk, whenever he was in Valentré he took her everywhere with him, carried on his arm, sleeping on his cloak in the vineyard, riding before him on his horse, or standing erect screaming with delight in his waggon, with a crown of vine-leaves on her head when the vintage came. With her Vaudès was himself a child; that his duties as a deputy obliged him to be much away from her alone made him endure the mortification with patience, when later he lost his post and found himself in no small danger in the brief reaction of Thermidor, and her love made life sweet even amid the keen disappointments which awaited him. He was not popular in Valentré, his party was much in the minority there, nor did the inhabitants approve of a man whose parents had been nobody attempting to bring in changes and reforms. That Vaudès had shared in the excesses of his party would always be remembered against him, and hamper him sorely, for already the current was beginning to run fast against the Montagnards. He had to reap what he had sown, and the crop was a bitter one; but he could and did forget all this when Espérance put her little hand in his, and prattled by his side, with the dark eyes which were so sweet and serious looking into his, and the small fair fingers clasping his own. The mothers of Valentré seeing him go by with his little daughter would turn a deaf ear to what their husbands said of him, and declare, "There is no great harm in a man like that;" and then again they would wonder why

his wife was so pale and reserved and silent, and speculate whether so good a father could possibly be a bad husband.

Vaudès noticed Geneviève's languid sadness less than did outsiders. He had grown used to it, used also to her holding aloof from him; he thought it was the old rift between them, and perhaps, satisfied with the warm love of Espérance, and, although by-and-by excluded from a share in public affairs, much occupied, he did not give many thoughts to what he had learned to consider hopeless. Geneviève felt very keenly his acquiescence in their divided lives, but she made no attempt to have it otherwise. What could she do? She busied herself with her household duties, with the shop, with Espérance, and lived her solitary life, making no friend or even intimate acquaintance, and ate her heart out in silence. The churches were all closed, and no minister of religion ventured to show himself in Valentré all the first seven years that she spent there, but by 1800 there was a great change, one which rejoiced the weary nation, but which caused men like Vaudès deep distress and anxiety. The First Consul was at the helm, and his policy was to restore public worship, and allow the *émigrés* to return.

It would be impossible to describe the blank, passionate despair with which these measures overwhelmed those who, like Vaudès, saw in the state religion only falsehood and superstition. It seemed to them irrepressibly dreadful that all which they had paid such a

price to overthrow and clear away should be brought back; they felt as if they had lived and laboured in vain, and sacrificed themselves and others for nothing—worse than nothing. The old superstition, as they honestly believed it, the old priestly power, would be restored, and become again the support and handmaid of despotism. The hatred which Vaudès and his party felt for the First Consul was so intense that it almost threw down that throne which already he was cautiously erecting; but the nation was sick of anarchy, and longing for a strong hand to steer the ship of State, and Napoleon went on his way irresistible, and faced the difficulties which the return of hundreds of dispossessed proprietors and the restoration of public worship created, with that stern sagacity and indomitable will which alone made him capable of governing at such a crisis. There was to be no question of restoring lands confiscated during the Revolution, and the exiles returned only as obedient subjects of the new régime. It was hard measures for the landless and ruined *émigrés*, but as yet they were too glad to come back at all to murmur. Their complaints and indignation had to be reserved until there was a Bourbon on the throne to hear them. Those who did complain loudly were the republicans, and for them prison or exile was always ready. Many friends of Vaudès were banished to the penal settlement of Guiana, and had he still been a deputy he would doubtless have shared their fate. His very heart burned at these things and at the increasing

restraint on liberty of speech ; but the splendid victory of Marengo and the passage of the Alps had intoxicated France with triumph and crowned Bonaparte with new laurels.

A sign of the times was that the long-empty rooms in the house where Vaudès lived were let to a returned *émigrée*. The owner, a wine-grower in the town, had never had an offer for them since 1791, and was glad to let them, even for the very moderate sum which his new tenant could offer. She was the first aristocrat who reappeared in Valentré, and therefore awakened a certain interest, hostile or friendly as the case might be.

To have an aristocrat lodging in the same house as himself, testifying that the past after all was not past, might be bitter to Vaudès, but Geneviève took a secret interest in the prospect, and little Espérance an undisguised one. The stranger arrived in the least conspicuous manner possible one evening, and she announced the news to Vaudès the moment he came in.

"Father," she cried, flying to meet him, "there is a beautiful lady come, and she has a little boy just as old as I am, and his name is Paul. There is a little boy for me to play with. Do you hear, father?"

Geneviève had never let her make companions of any of the children in Valentré, and the arrival of one in their own house was a great event. Vaudès lifted her up, looking at her and kissing her with passionate affection.

"He loves her a thousand times better than he does

me," Geneviève thought, as she saw the fair little face pressed against the thin, swarthy one of Vaudès.

"I saw the lady, and she smiled at me, and the little boy is lame, and he smiled at me too, and I went upstairs with them, and helped them a great deal, and I like them."

"Wife, I will not have the child know these people," said Vaudès sharply. "We have nothing to do with them nor they with us. Recollect that."

He held Espérance closer with his arm as she stood by him and looked up full of eagerness.

Geneviève made no answer; she felt as if the child had a right to associate with these people, who were of her own class, and she wanted to render them all the friendly offices she could.

"Father, I want to see the little boy again; he is so pretty and white and lame; the lady said he had been ill when they came over the sea in a ship—what is the sea, father?—and she asked me to come and play with him."

"No, my little one," said Vaudès gently but decisively; "you must not play with him or go to this lady; I shall be angry with my little daughter if I hear she has done so."

Espérance burst into tears. They were the first that words of his had ever made her shed, and they moved him unreasonably. He actually turned pale, then rose and went out, leaving her sobbing passionately. Geneviève looked at her and made no attempt to console

her. She was almost as much disappointed as Espérance, and she asked herself how she could possibly withdraw from the offers of service which she had rashly made to the new-comer.

Vaudès did not return until Espérance was asleep, and then he went and looked at her for some time, feeling strangely troubled. She was flushed, and gave a little sob now and then in her sleep. The disappointment had evidently gone deep, and he began to reflect how difficult it would be to carry out his prohibition unless it were the desire of the new lodger and of Geneviève too, and he knew very well where her sympathies would be. He resolved to make it clear at once to this *ci-devant* that it was his will to keep his daughter apart from aristocrats.

"Thou art a child of the Revolution, my little one," he said, looking earnestly at her, and then he went upstairs, and Geneviève listened in anxious wonder to his footsteps as he mounted the stairs.

His knock was answered by an "Enter" in a clear treble voice, and he stood for a moment looking round the large, barely-furnished room in perplexity, for he could see no one there; but the next instant his eyes fell on a couch where lay, almost lost in its depths, a little pallid fellow whose blue eyes met him with a smile of welcome, while a small thin hand was held out to draw him to the boy's side.

"Enter, monsieur," the childish voice repeated, "mamma will be here directly; she is in the next

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room. I would fetch her, only my crutch has got broken."

There was such sweet courtesy in the little fellow's manner, and in the gesture with which he invited Vaudès to sit by him on the wide sofa, that no man with a grain of tenderness, least of all a man who loved children as Vaudès did, could have resisted it. He forgot all about the boy's being an aristocrat, and why he had come, and sat down at once, looking compassionately at the frail little figure and blue eyes—too large and bright for health.

"And have you been lame long, my child?" he asked, almost as if he had been speaking to Espérance.

"Always, monsieur."

"Always!" repeated Vaudès, wincing a little at the title bestowed on him.

"Yes, always. When I was a little baby mamma had to escape from our château in the night, because wicked men came and set it on fire, and took papa away, and she snatched me up and ran into the woods, and mamma fell and I fell, and so I was lame. And she stayed all night in the woods; her feet were bare, and she had only a mantle over her night-dress, and it was winter. She says that is why I have always been ill. She could not keep me warm, you see; and she was ill too after that. Were they not wicked men, monsieur?"

"Call me citizen," said Vaudès. He was very near admitting, in spite of his principles, that the boy was

right, and the piteousness of the story forced itself strongly upon him. How should he have felt towards aristocrats who had driven his Geneviève with Espérance in her arms out into the winter woods? "No, they were not wicked," he said; "their fathers had been treated like slaves by those who called themselves their lords, and at last they could bear it no longer."

"But we never did them any harm," said the child, perplexed.

"What became of you after that night?"

Vaudès would have had plenty to say at his club, but somehow he could not lay it before this child who had been such an innocent victim.

"Mamma walked and walked till she got to some kind people who helped her to get to England; that is where we have been, you know, and now we have come home."

"Home!" repeated Vaudès.

"Yes; mamma always told me France was our real home, and that I was a Frenchman. She was so glad to come back."

Again Vaudès was struck. It had never occurred to him that aristocrats felt France their fatherland as much as republicans did, and longed for it in absence perhaps as much as he himself could have done. And what a coming home!

"Do you belong to these parts?" he asked. "What is your mother's name?"

"De Maupas, Monsieur le citoyen," answered the

boy, mindful of the lesson he had received ; "she was a demoiselle de Saldanhac."

"De Saldanhac !" repeated Vaudès, and thought of the ruined château on the other side of the river.

"She lived near here in a big house when she was a little girl, with ceilings like these and large rooms. I never saw such a great room as this before ; we had two little, little ones in London, and mamma worked all day long, and M. le Chevalier carried the mantles she made to the shops. Sometimes when I looked out of the window I used to see ladies in carriages wearing mamma's mantles, and it made me laugh. I could not help much, but I threaded her needles and made knots on the thread, and that was something, you know."

Vaudès felt his eyes moisten as the boy looked up in his face. He stroked the fair hair off the hot, tired little brow, and his heart went out in an involuntary thanksgiving, though he hardly knew to whom it was addressed, for the perfect health of his Espérance. As if somehow the thought of her had passed on to the boy, Paul said—

"You have a little girl, monsieur—citoyen, I mean ; I saw her when we came to the door, and she went upstairs with us. Her mother carried me, or I should never have got up, and mamma was too tired to help me much. Will you let your little girl come here ? Oh do. I have never had any one to play with."

Vaudès had refused Espérance and resisted her tears, but he was entirely at a loss how to reject the pleading



“The door of the inner room opened, and he rose hastily as a lady came out.”

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of the invalid boy, who awaited his reply with a confiding yet wistful look. What could he say to a child who had suffered from the deeds of Vaudès' own party even in his cradle?

"Girls are not good playfellows for boys," he began, and just then the door of the inner room opened, and he rose hastily as a lady came out, with a look of surprise which changed into a pleased smile.

She was barely middle-aged, but her hair was as grey as if it had been powdered; she wore it turned over a cushion, and falling in a heavy curl on each side of her head *à la dauphine*, and its silvered hue contrasted not unbecomingly with her dark eyebrows and the delicate touch on her cheeks of the rouge which before the Revolution it was the privilege of the nobles only to wear. This was an unmistakable aristocrat, and Vaudès prepared at once for war, but he was baffled when she came forward and said with a grace which was evidently sincere—

"Ah, *mon voisin*, how kind! You are come already to make our acquaintance. I saw you come home, and your wife was so good to me when we arrived; I do not know what I should have done but for her kindness. Nay, sit down, pray." She signed to a seat, taking her place as she did so at the foot of the couch. "You have been talking to my Paul," she went on; "he is so happy to be here. Ah," as she noticed Vaudès' compassionate glance, "he is tired out now, but to-morrow he will be like himself. Is it not so, my son? And

have you asked our neighbour where we can get a new crutch? He walks so well with a crutch now, monsieur."

The pleasure in her face and voice, the progress which she evidently considered this to indicate, touched Vaudès afresh. He looked at the fragile boy, and the mother whose eyes were dwelling on him full of love and tender anxiety, and he forgot she was an aristocrat.

"I will see to it if you will let me have the length, madame," he said. The title slipped out unawares; he started and bit his lips as he said it.

"You call mamma madame, though you would not let me call you monsieur," observed Paul.

"One does not easily forget old habits," said Vaudès, disconcerted.

"No," answered Paul's mother, with a little smile, in which there was a distinct sense that though she might now-a-days be only a citoyenne in the eyes of the law, it did not make her one whit less noble, or less the Marquise de Maupas, that a set of democrats should ignore her rank.

"And do I ask too much if I beg you sometimes to carry my boy downstairs?" she added, with the gracious tone and air of one who bestows a favour by asking it. Vaudès inwardly resented it. "He could get up the steps, I think, with my arm, but going down—they are so polished—if he should slip!"

"No, no, that is too great a risk," said Vaudès, again only thinking of the child,

"You are too kind; one can ask favours from one's countrymen without feeling them a burden. I detested receiving them in a foreign country. But indeed," she added, with a little laugh like silver bells, "I think I did the English greater favours than any I received, since I sold them mantles which the British imagination could appreciate but never have conceived. Did I not, my Paul?"

"Yes, mamma; I have been telling Monsieur le citoyen so."

The title made Vaudès smile in spite of himself.

"You may not think it, citizen," Madame de Maupas went on, gaily, "but I found that when it came to the point, aristocrat though I was, I could earn my bread. Arrived in London, I saw myself, my baby, and my friend M. de Colombe, who had shared our flight, penniless and friendless, with clothes borrowed from friends in France, and for property of my own only a mantle snatched up on flying from my château—"

"Yes, I know all that," said Vaudès abruptly. He did not like the story enough to wish it repeated. She smiled slightly at the brusque interruption.

"Paul has told you? The little chatterbox. Well, an idea struck me. I went to a large shop and asked to see the owner. He came, and I proposed to him to trust me with materials, and he consented—I know not why, except that the English, a very singular people, citizen, take an interest in us *émigrés*. I set to work and constructed a mantle like my own. Monsieur, I

had had the soul of a milliner in me unguessed all those years. It had a true Parisian grace. A fashionable miladi at once recognised this, and bought it, and soon all London wanted my mantles. We lived on them, all three of us, and economised for our return. And we have returned: we are again in our own land. You who only had the pleasure of driving us out do not dream what the keen joy of coming back is to an exile. We owe you that."

Vaudès made no reply; he had nothing to say to the gay banter of this woman, who, ruined, exiled, landless, was so thoroughly secure in her birth and rank that she made him, in spite of his deepest convictions, feel her inferior. She quickly perceived the change in his expression.

"Well, we must not speak of that, M. le citoyen," she said, with a gay look at Paul, "we are going to be friends, is it not so? You love children, I see, and you have such a dear little girl; she looks as if she had never been ill and never been sad. She will be like sunshine to my poor Paul," and she held out a fair hand, which Vaudès could not refuse to see, though instead of kissing it he touched the finger-tips in a reluctant, ashamed way which made her laugh outright.

"Ah, citizen," she cried, "politeness is no longer a crime, though the want of it always is one. Bear my thanks to your wife for her most kind help; it made me feel I was among my compatriots again. You are going?"

"Yes, citoyenne," he answered, as if to protest by the name against the feelings she had inspired him with. He did not speak too amicably.

"Adieu, citizen; you will come and mend my crutch, and bring your little girl," said Paul, putting his thin, feverish hand into that of Vaudès, whose face softened at once. "What is her name?"

"Espérance, my child."

"Espérance! what a pretty name! And yours, monsieur?"

"Vaudès—Jacques Vaudès."

"Vaudès!" repeated the Marquise, as if the sound struck her. "There were people on my father's lands of that name."

Vaudès said nothing.

"They could not be relations of yours, of course," she went on as she looked at him; "they were miserably poor. I recollect them because the evening my marriage contract was signed the woman came to entreat my father to help her—some *procès* about half a pound of salt or so, a miserable trifle, had ruined her, I forget the details; but she was a barefooted, ragged creature that it hurt one to see; and I begged my father to arrange the matter. One could not let her weep and lament, and be driven away by the valets. But I dare say there were innumerable cases like this, as my father said."

"There were," answered Vaudès, with bitter vehemence. He stooped and kissed Paul, and made a stiff

and unwilling bow to the airy patricienne, knowing in his heart that his visit had resulted in total defeat. However much he might dislike the aristocratic mother, he could not resist the sick boy; he knew he should have to surrender, and take *Espérance* when he went to fetch the broken crutch, and he chafed at it; but the thought of the invalid child haunted him, and he could not refuse some respect to the mother who had earned the bread of three people in exile. The boy looked short-lived; how should he himself feel if *Espérance* looked like that?

He found Geneviève with a troubled, expectant look, much afraid of his anger when he learned that she had helped to instal their new neighbours. His first words relieved her.

"The woman overhead has a sweet little boy," he said, "but he looks as if he would not live. What can one do to nurse him up?"

She did not venture to ask what had passed, but accepted the tacit retraction of his previous order.

"Even aristocrats can be good mothers, I suppose," he went on; "and they have courage—wonderful courage!"

He paused, thinking of some whom he had seen mount the scaffold.

"Strange that none flinched at the last but Dubarry, and she was not a noble. So that woman was a *Sal-danhac*, and she got the old Baron to pay the fine which fell on my father and mother because they had

saved a little of the salt which the law obliged a man to buy for pot and *salière*, whether he could afford it or not, to cure a pig. The officials came down on them, seized the pork, fined them three hundred livres. That was justice and law in those days which some people regret!"

This was a topic which Geneviève dreaded. "This demoiselle de Saldanhac was kind then," she ventured, "and the Baron paid the fine?"

"True; but the shameful injustice remained—the burning shame that such a state of things could exist. The Baron was not a bad lord, but what could he do? he was tied hand and foot by the abuses which made up the whole system. He wanted to improve the hovels where his people lived. What happened?—they all resisted; a better cottage brought heavier taxes. He offered better tools, more cattle. Ah, bah! no, it would only have been for the profit of the tax-collector."

Vaudès spoke with intense bitterness. He rather understated than overstated the case.

"It was the whole system," he continued; "the nobles and clergy had everything, the people nothing. Did not D'Argenson himself say, 'Our labourers are slaves, beasts of burden fastened to a yoke, led by the whip, understanding nothing, knowing nothing.' Ragged and barefooted, she said. Yes, by forty my poor mother hardly looked a woman. And yet when I was a child we were not so ill off; we had a little farm, but there

were fruit trees on it, they took the goodness out of it, and they belonged to the Baron, and must not be cut down; nor might we alter the crops, for if we turned corn land into pasture it lessened the tithes. After all, we did not grudge the sheaf to the curé, for often he was as poor as a peasant, and went and came in heat and cold among the sick, working as hard as—a colporteur,” said Vaudès, with his low laugh; “and what did tithes bring them where rye was grown? But as for the monks who lived on the fat of the land, and the bishops who looked down on every one, especially the poorer clergy, bah!”

“M. de Saldanhac lived here then?” said Geneviève, anxious to turn the conversation.

“For the most part. He knew at least that the peasants were not such as they saw on the stage at Paris, with red shoes and high heels, and silk and ribbons, dancing and herding sheep as white as snow. But what could he or any one do without a clean sweep of it all? And now—heavens and earth! to see the old abuses spring up again, the old hypocrisies shoot afresh, the best patriots transported to perish in those accursed swamps which devour them, sent out in vessels hardly fit to cross a pool, undergoing a slow martyrdom.”

“Do they suffer more than the *détenus* on Les Deux Frères?” said Geneviève.

Les Deux Frères was the prison ship where the Jacobins had sent so many priests. Vaudès turned

on her as if she had struck him. "A woman's answer!" he said, with an angry glow on his face, and he turned from her and buried himself in a history of Rome, which was his constant study. Geneviève would have given much to have recalled her retort, but it was too late; he read in silence for the rest of the evening. Their conversations were apt to end thus.

Meanwhile Madame de Maupas was saying with a laugh, "An ogre, but tamable. It is amusing to see how alarmed a Terrorist is in the saloon of a poor patricienne whom he would not have had the least hesitation in beheading. Now, my son, it is your bedtime. Come, my Paul; take care you do not slip."

She put her arm tenderly round the child, supporting and helping him. "I shall have my boy sleeping again under a roof which has belonged to his family!" she added, with a glad smile. "This house was once ours."

"And the Chevalier—he will play with me and the little girl," said Paul. "I do want the Chevalier. Do not you, mother?"

"To play with? Yes, I think I do," answered Madame de Maupas, gaily.

CHAPTER VII.

THE Chevalier de Péron Colombe was one of those people who are seldom named without a smile, but a kindly one. "*Vieil enfant!*" Madame de Maupas sometimes called him, between jest and earnest, and in fact there was something wonderfully childlike about the sentimental chevalier, who was a sort of troubadour astray in the nineteenth century. He had lived through all these terrible years hardly disturbed by the tremendous events taking place around him, and had accompanied Madame de Maupas into exile without a murmur, indifferent to the loss of fortune and position; not from philosophy, but because he did not trouble himself at all about such things. It even seemed possible that if any one had suddenly spoken to him of the Revolution, he might have asked, "What revolution?" He lived happily in a world of his own and took no interest at all in the actual one; had viewed with perfect serenity the fall of a monarchy which had lasted through fourteen centuries, and was quite as ready to be on friendly terms with those who

overthrew it as with those who were struggling to restore it. What were all these tumults and disasters and changes to a man whose mind was possessed by the idea of writing a great poem, an *épopée*, as he called it, which should wipe out the reproach that France can boast of no such epic as can Italy and England, an *épopée* with Clovis for its hero? He knew the very day and hour when this great project revealed itself to him, and kindled him with enthusiasm, and he resolved to renounce those enigmas and *vers de société*, which had made such a success in the drawing-rooms of his friends, and figured in so many albums, and devote himself wholly to his poem. The plan had been arranged and rearranged, and the length was to be twenty-seven thousand lines, of which a few had been written before the Revolution began, with delicately-pointed pens on the smoothest and thickest of paper, and he had carried the manuscript into exile with him; but, as he said, the fogs of Albion were fatal to inspiration—or at all events to his inspiration, for in the last nine years, though it was his impression that he was constantly working at it, the poem did not seem to have made any marked progress. It is true, as he would say, that he had occasionally strayed into the by-paths of Parnassus, and allowed his mind to turn to lighter subjects. He had written a tragedy on the death of Roland, and had begun a romance in the style of Le Grand Cyrus, but it did not get on much faster than the *épopée*.

The name which his family had bestowed on the

chevalier some sixty years earlier was Télémaque, and in consequence he was fond of calling Madame de Maupas Calypso, and paid her countless flowery compliments on the strength of it, of which Mentor would certainly not have approved. He piqued himself on being her faithful though hopeless adorer, and regarded his own fidelity with a certain admiration, and he really was devoted to her and Paul, and had followed them into exile, though so inoffensive a being, with relations moreover who stood well with the republican party, might probably have remained unmolested, and it would have been a great deal better for his fortunes if he had stayed in France. But Madame de Maupas was, as he declared, his guiding star, his tutelary deity, his fount of inspiration, and he left his country, and both astonished and touched her by appearing before her one day in London, where he had discovered her with no small difficulty. He would always believe, with innocent triumph, that she could never have got on at all but for him, and indeed, though the problem of how to support a third person added not a little at first to her difficulties, it was a real advantage to have such a faithful friend and champion at hand, and one who was indefatigable in amusing Paul, telling him endless stories, woven by his fertile and romantic brain, and wonderfully ingenious in devices for beguiling away the weary hours spent in a small London lodging by the invalid child.

The chevalier was the best of playfellows, for he

played not only to entertain the boy, but because he enjoyed it himself. Paul would soon have tired of games in which a grown-up companion joined merely to amuse him; he never wearied of those shared by M. de Colombe, because he instinctively felt that his friend, though a grey, elderly man, was at heart as young as himself, and liked them as much as he did.

It would very much have surprised and hurt the chevalier had he realised that any one thought him elderly. To himself he seemed quite a young man, a Prince Charmant, irresistible and fascinating, and he wore the fashions of his youth, and was proud of the grace with which he played at cup and ball, which had been the fashionable amusement in his youth. He was as little aware that he could grow old, as he was that any one could think him ridiculous, and in fact to those who really knew him he never seemed either; they took him as he was, and laughed at him and loved him.

It seemed a matter of course to the Chevalier Télémaque that when Madame de Maupas returned to France he should settle where she did; but when they landed she had sent him to seek his brother, who had not only weathered the storm, but had grown rich in these years which had made many poor, and she laid her commands on him to claim his share of the family inheritance, a thing which it never would have occurred to the unworldly poet to do; but he obeyed her orders, as he always did, and came back as soon

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as possible to her at Valentré, delighted at having met his brother, and other relations and old friends, but having looked remarkably little after his own interests.

"My poor chevalier!" Madame de Maupas said, with an eloquent gesture, when he told her with elation that his brother had settled a small annuity on him; "and you thanked him, no doubt, as if he had divided his whole fortune with you. See what it is to live with one's head in the clouds!"

"Where Calypso is what can I need or miss?" said the gallant chevalier, and it was the simple truth, though he had never felt any very strong emotions, and though all the affection he had to bestow was faithfully given to Madame de Maupas, it was rather a romantic friendship than love, and when she became a widow he had no more wish to marry her than she had to marry him.

"Marry the Marquise!" he had exclaimed to a mutual friend, who had suggested the idea; "I should not be able to call my mind my own! She has a will that could dry up the Zuider Zee. Besides, where should I pass my evenings?"

He took a lodging near Vaudès' house, and came in every morning to hear how she had slept, and how Paul was, returning to his literary labours after a brief visit, and coming again to spend the last hours of the day with them, just as he had done in London; and he always had an astonishing deal of news to report, picked up from every one he met, for the chevalier

was of a friendly and sociable nature, and would talk to any one; and then there was the account of how the *épopée* was getting on, and how often he had, according to Boileau's counsel, polished and repolished each line, had added here and effaced there, unless his romance had occupied him and driven poetry into the background. He was perfectly happy in his work; it had made him busy and contented in exile, and it made him so now that he had returned.

"Some day I shall publish my collected works," he would say, lifting his head, with a triumphant gaze into the future, "and the profits will enrich my friend Paul here. Otherwise I should not condescend to make it a matter of money; I do not write for gain; the stars at my birth made me a poet. I am not mercenary, as my Calypso knows."

"No, that you unfortunately are not," she interjected.

"To glory, whether won by pen or sword, no Frenchman can be indifferent," he went on, "but of profit I could never allow myself to think were it not for your son. For his sake I think I would not refuse to receive payment from a publisher; with that motive it might not be beneath my dignity as a gentleman and a poet. What do you say, Marquise?"

He never detected the laughter lurking in her bright eyes.

"Well, Chevalier, how has the *épopée* got on?" she would ask, as he tripped into the room on his high

heels, with the amiable air that he used to assume on entering a room in the days when he was known in the salons of Paris as "le beau danseur."

A shake of the head was too often his reply.

"Alas, to-day Phœbus is deaf and Pegasus restive, and, besides, I am always being interrupted. I should have completed my poem long ago but for interruptions. This very day no sooner did I sit down, about to fix a great passage on paper, a passage which occurred to me last night as I wandered under the pale rays of the mistress of Endymion,"—this was a greater flight of fancy than any in his *épopée*, for the chevalier was a great deal too much afraid of catching cold ever to think of taking a moonlight walk,—“I am called, I am addressed, the commonplace enters and banishes the ideal, and the passage which would have been immortal is lost for ever!”

It seemed less probable than ever that the *épopée* would be finished after the chevalier came to Valentré, for when he went out, to draw inspiration from nature, as he said, he was sure to fall into conversation with some one, while in London his total inability to learn any language but his own, limited considerably the time spent in intercourse with his neighbours. “If not nature proper, I have been studying human nature,” he would say, “a nobler one and far more interesting. Nature as seen in woods and rocks and skies has her beauties, but even then they need grouping, arranging, by a painter or a poet. No landscape of hers equals

one composed by a master," said the chevalier, speaking the conviction of much greater critics than himself at that day. Even more distracting than the pleasures of conversation, to which he returned with such zest, was the old curiosity shop ruled over by Geneviève. To Valentré in general it was not particularly attractive, though it brought some custom. Vaudès' intention was to give it up when its present stores were disposed of, but to the chevalier it offered endless amusement. He would come in playing airily with the cup and ball which he habitually carried, and sit and talk to Geneviève by the hour, handling and examining one thing after another, and shrugging his shoulders up to his ears with a gesture of despair at the impossibility of buying them, yet unable to tear himself away, and ending by squandering so much of his little means that he left nothing for necessities, so that he would have got into serious difficulties had he not bethought himself of carrying his quarterly pension to Madame de Maupas, imploring her not to let him have any money, however much he might try to move her, unless he could afford it.

After that, as she only answered his supplications with mock sternness when in weak moments he came and demanded his money, he not only paid his way, but could sometimes secure a long-coveted bit of porcelain, or a coin, or some other treasure, which he would carry home and contemplate with indescribable satisfaction and triumph, and put before him for three or

four days after on his writing-table, to inspirit him while he sat at work ; but he always ended by carrying it to Madame de Maupas, and insisting on adorning her rooms with it.

Such a harmless, feather-brained monomaniac as this, who had understood nothing, learned nothing, and cared nothing about what had been going on under his eyes, and thought Clovis a much more important person than Napoleon Bonaparte, could not but fill a man like Vaudès with blank astonishment. The chevalier seemed to him one of the most extraordinary products of that system which he had done his best to annihilate. His contempt and disgust were at first almost equal, but by degrees, almost unawares to himself, he lapsed into a tolerant, wondering amusement. No one could feel seriously angry with such a kind-hearted, visionary *vieil enfant* as the chevalier. Vaudès even found himself betrayed into a liking for him, and as for Espérance, she looked on him as her best friend, and would climb on his knee and hunt in his bag for bonbons,—he always had a stock in the “ridicule” which he carried about as well as his cup and ball,—and explore the little boxes which it contained, filled with scents and pastilles ; or demand a story, paying him with a kiss, or by standing before him and singing, in a clear child’s voice that delighted him, some old ditty which she had learned from Geneviève. “My rossignolet,” M. de Colombe would call her, a pretty old name which flattered the little one, and made

all the ancient songs with a nightingale in them favourites with her.

Vaudès had not given in to her being constantly with the little party of aristocrats. He had given Geneviève distinct orders to make both her own and the child's intercourse with them as rare as possible, which merely had the effect of making every meeting the more important and delightful; and then Vaudès himself often helped to carry the boy downstairs, bringing him into the shop, when some piteous message would be sent to him from Paul, that he was so tired of being upstairs, or else, might not Espérance come to him? or, perhaps, might he be carried into the kitchen? and it was hard to refuse. Vaudès would fume and chafe, and end by fetching the child and settling him tenderly wherever he could be most comfortable, and the boy grew very fond of him, and would caress him with loving touch and words that moved Vaudès to a warm return before he knew what he was about. Who could be otherwise than compassionate and tender, he would say to himself, to a child who often suffered much, and at the best could never know the careless, rosy joys of his age, and, if he lived, had only the life of an invalid before him!

The kitchen was the place where Geneviève sat when the shop was closed for the evening, and Vaudès came indoors. There were only three small bedrooms besides on this floor, with offices and unfurnished rooms, once all filled when the house belonged to a noble,

but now closed or let as warehouses, as Vaudès did not choose to have another family sharing his *rez-de-chaussée*. The kitchen was in proportion to the fortune and state of earlier owners rather than the present ones. It was a large low room, with brick floor and a great hearth, on which stood iron dogs with carved ends, which could have supported a tree trunk, and over them still hung a huge and ancient spit, and within its depths Geneviève hung up necklaces of sausages and hams to smoke. It was a cheerful place to sit in when the wood sent showers of sparks up the wide chimney, and Vaudès used to sit and read by the light of one of the picturesque lamps used in that district, and Geneviève sat silent over her work, and Espérance played with the great cat Numa, whose short fur, tawny and thick, big head, and tufted tail gave him a sort of wild beast air, not at all borne out by his stolid good temper. If Paul were there too the children talked together in a low, happy babble, which broke now and then into joyous laughter, and however absorbed he might be in his book, even if it were that racy old translation of Plutarch's *Lives* by Bishop Amyot, which Vaudès read and re-read with undiminished interest, he would smile in sympathy, and lay his hand on the head of Espérance, if she were near him, as she almost always was, without looking up from the page he was studying, and Geneviève would lift her eyes for a moment, and let them rest on them for an instant, with a faint change of

colour and compression of the lips which no one noticed.

Overhead most likely the chevalier and Madame de Maupas would be playing chess, or discussing his last strophes, to which she listened kindly and patiently, suppressing her strong inclination to raillery with real kindness, and they would talk over old times, and Paul's future. Other people thought he would have none, they told one another that she would never rear him, but to herself she never admitted this, and she was leaving no stone unturned and nothing untried which might recover some fragment of the inheritance which might have been his. She hoped that others of his scattered family would return and back her up, but as yet she hardly knew even where they were. Her father-in-law had married again in exile, and was still again at Lausanne, where many *émigrés* had taken refuge; her brother was with the Comte d'Artois, while his son, the future head of the De Saldanhacs, was she knew not where—all were dispersed and ruined; it was the story of hundreds of other families. That her brother was well known as a fanatical royalist was unfortunate for her; she herself had no illusions as to monarchy, and would willingly have accepted favours from the actual Government for Paul, or justice in the shape of favours, had she been able to get the opportunity. There was no one, however, to lend her a helping hand, and the utmost she saw any hope of obtaining was a small yearly *rente*, which she fortun-

ately could show papers entitling her to claim. It was something, after having had nothing, and Paul had not been brought up to luxury, as she would observe to the chevalier.

"When I think how it ought to have been with him!" she said once, on one of the rare occasions when she allowed herself to dwell on the boy's feeble health and precarious fortunes, and her eyes filled with tears. "He should have been a soldier, like my father and brother. How proud we were of Gontran in his uniform! and how well I remember our joy when my father used to come home—he was so often away, and we adored him!—and the delightful manner in which he used to tell an anecdote! We were never tired of asking him to tell us again how on the morning of his first battle he met the old Commander de Laval, who looked at him and said indignantly, "How! young man! no lace frill, and not shaven, on a day when you may have the honour of being killed in the service of the king! Go and dress properly!" Madame de Maupas had inherited her father's talent, she too could relate an anecdote charmingly.

"Nature meant me too for a military life," said the mild chevalier, with entire conviction, as he delicately absorbed a pinch of perfumed snuff from the box which he held poised in his dainty, slender fingers. It was one of those snuff-boxes with a miniature of Louis Quinze set in shagreen, which became the fashion after the death of that prince, and had it been found in

his pocket a year or two earlier would have been a death-warrant. "Had my country demanded it I would have slept unmurmuringly on straw, have rejoiced in privations, sacrificed my fortune; but to do all this to gratify a mob of democrats—no. Therefore I did not follow so many of our friends, though I might and should have joined the army of the Princes had you, Marquise, been there; but after all, when we placed the white flag under the direction of the foreigner we hardly made our cause more national."

Madame de Maupas looked at him with the slight surprise which the occasional flashes of shrewdness in the chevalier still awoke in her, even after these long years of intimate acquaintance.

"Ah," she said, laughing, after an instant's pause, "you were destined to win your laurels by the pen, not the sword, chevalier. Nay, we all know you have already done so."

"Ah, madame! Well, if it be so it is to you that I owe it. My greatest success—" M. de Colombe really had in former days had immense and deserved popularity, not only as a perfect dancer, but as a maker of puns, riddles, and occasional fugitive pieces—"my greatest success was the quatrain which Calypso inspired by asking me to give back the billet she had sent me—you remember it?

'Vous le voulez? je brûterai
Cette lettre si tendre;
Sur mon cœur je la poserai
Pour la réduire en cendre.'

something to ask of you. Give me a little money; I really must buy a new pair of shoes."

"New shoes, Chevalier! what a culpable extravagance! I could not listen to such a suggestion," answered Madame de Maupas, while Paul looked up from his book, appreciating and enjoying the situation.

"But, charming friend, I perceive that these shoes are shabby; I really cannot appear before you in them. It would be an impertinence to any lady to wear such a pair in her presence."

"But since I excuse them?"

"You are all kindness as usual, but it is due to myself as well as you. A very little, Marquise, just enough to buy them, and perhaps also one thing more," suggested the chevalier, coaxingly. "There is a cup in the shop downstairs, a delicious Sèvres cup, with a portrait of Madame de Pompadour, a ground of tender rose, and an exquisite shape, dear friend, and offered for a nothing."

The chevalier pleaded with the piteousness of a child, but Madame de Maupas was inexorable.

"You do not need either the cup or the shoes," she said, with severity, while Paul laughed with all his heart. "Go and admire both as much as you like, but do not venture to think of buying them for another three months. My son, you are not learning your lesson. See, chevalier, how you distract this child. Will you go, I ask you?"

"Tyrant!" said M. de Colombe, departing crestfallen.

He went back to the shop to gaze with longing eyes at the Sèvres cup, but did not dream of disobeying his autocrat. Vaudès chanced to be there, folding some heavy tapestry which Geneviève had unrolled earlier in the day to air and dust. Espérance was there too. She had dressed herself up in a brocaded gown which she had found somewhere, and which trailed on the ground far behind her, and was standing on her stool looking at herself in a Venetian mirror. A ray of light which came through the small leaded panes of the window looking to the street fell on her as she stood, bringing out the colour of the green silk, with little branches of flowers strewn on it. The long dress gave her height and made her look much older, and she had turned back her abundant hair as nearly in the fashion of Madame de Maupas' as she could. Vaudès smiled as he watched her, and with a silent gesture pointed her out to the chevalier. Utterly unlike as the two men were, they found a link in Espérance, of whom M. de Colombe had grown very fond.

"A coquette at seven years old," he said, smiling; but his face assumed a puzzled, wondering look as he surveyed the child, and the reflection which the mirror sent back.

"Whom is she like?" he said, half aloud; "she recalls some one to me."

Vaudès looked at him and then at Espérance. Open air and a hardy, healthy life had browned her fair skin and given roses to her cheeks. It had never struck

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him that she was in any especial way unlike the children of her own rank, although of course he thought her a hundred times dearer and prettier. But now, all at once, he seemed to see a something in her not like them, something of those aristocrats with whom he had had to do when they stood to be judged, or to ascend the steps of the guillotine, and it perplexed and annoyed him.

"It is the costume," he said abruptly. "Espérance, my child, take off that dress."

She looked round and immediately obeyed. Geneviève sometimes complained that she was hard to manage, but Vaudès never had reason to say so. The gown slipped to the ground, she loosed and twisted up her hair in its usual fashion, and in her white dimity frock and muslin fichu, and the red ribbon about her waist, which Geneviève hated and which Vaudès insisted on, her hair tied high on the little head and falling in curls on her shoulders, she was again the Espérance of every-day life. With the attitude and costume, the likeness which perplexed the chevalier had vanished.

"It was fancy," said the chevalier. "Here, little one."

He gave her a handful of bonbons, and she took them with a pretty gesture of thanks. Geneviève had trained her carefully, and she was naturally a very sweet child, with inborn graciousness of air and manner. Vaudès was secretly very proud that his "child of the Revolution" should be as graceful and gracious as any.

patrician's daughter. She went up to the wide landing at the head of the oak staircase, a favourite post of hers. Formerly the door leading from it to the first floor had been kept locked, but since Madame de Maupas had had the upper rooms it was always unfastened, as Paul could be conveyed more easily down this staircase than the narrower and dark one which Madame de Maupas used when she went out alone. Vaudès would not allow Espérance to seek Paul uninvited, but he could come as far as the door of communication on his crutches, and there was always the hope that he might peep through and call her. She sat there and ate her bonbons, putting the prettiest aside for him, and choosing them with great care. Espérance had a natural turn for everything pretty and elegant; Republican simplicity, as it called itself, would never have attracted her, and all Vaudès' efforts to make her admire the bust of Danton, which he had placed on a bracket above the chair where he was accustomed to sit and read, had never had any other effect than to make her give a mutinous shrug of her little white shoulders and remark, "How ugly he is!" This was undeniably true, and after all, as Vaudès was constrained to admit, Danton was not a child's hero, yet he was hurt that his daughter should have no other feeling for the man who to him was the one heroic soul of the Revolution, and whose death had been the greatest shock he had ever known.

- Espérance sat overhead and played with her bonbons,

while she sang an old ballad to which the chevalier unconsciously beat time.

“Un jour de may, de grand matin,
Je descendis dans mon jardin.
Gentil coquelicot, mesdames,
Gentil coquelicot nouveau.
Je descendis dans mon jardin
Pour y cueillir du romarin,
Gentil coquelicot, mesdames,
Gentil coquelicot nouveau,”

sang the child in her clear treble.

“Je ne pas point cueillir un brin ;
Rossignolet vint sur ma main,
Gentil coquelicot mesdames,”

hummed the chevalier, while he gazed tenderly at the forbidden cup, and examined a tray full of elegant trifles—silver embossed scissors with fantastic handles, boxes for rouge or patches, clasps which had held a mantle or a doublet, or perhaps a plume in a cap.

“I wandered by your noble river under the olives this morning,” he said to Vaudès.

“Olives?” repeated Vaudès astonished; “we have none here.”

“Those were olives which I admired,” said the chevalier, “silvery grey, growing by the river as it rushed wildly down to the ocean where it loses itself.”

“The Garonne,” said Vaudès, “our river, hardly to be called a noble one, though rapid assuredly, does not fall into the sea.”

“It is all the same thing,” answered M. de Colombe,

ruffled; "you are not a poet. To me these olives and the snow-capped mountains in the distance suggest innumerable lovely fancies."

"So I perceive," said Vaudès, smiling, and suddenly recollecting the total inability of the chevalier to see or relate anything without embellishing it quite unconsciously. "To me most likely the olives would have looked like common willows, and I should not have been able to see any snow at all."

"I dare say, not," said M. de Colombe, indulgently; and then he began to discourse on the beauty of the face painted on the cup, a portrait of that magnificent sinner Madame de Pompadour, with enthusiasm which made Vaudès arch his brows and look at him in stern wonder. There was a singular lesson to be learned from the way in which the aristocrat and the plebeian regarded this little portrait.

"Il me dit en son beau latin
Que les hommes ne valent rien,"

sang Espérance.

"He might have said it of women too," muttered Vaudès savagely, while he made a mental calculation of how much money and how many lives had gone to gratify the royal favourite's caprice of creating Versailles.

"And this plate, how exquisite!" continued the chevalier, quite unaware of Vaudès' feelings, "the pale-green ground and the car of Venus drawn by doves! Delicious! I had not seen this before; I almost prefer

it to the cup; but no, the patrician beauty of these features, the noble air—nothing can equal that.”

“Que les hommes ne valent rien,
Et les garçons encore moins bien,”

warbled little Espérance overhead on the landing.

“Des dames il ne me dit rien,
Mais des demoiselles grand bien,”

responded the chevalier with a gallant bow to her, and then he contemplated the plate afresh.

“The doves would be appropriate to yourself, monsieur,” said Vaudès, making up his mind that it was of no use to take such a frivolous being as the chevalier appeared to him seriously. “Your name——”

“Doves are indeed found in our arms, but a goose is the crest of the Péron family,” said the chevalier. “Our name Péron, to which Colombe was added in comparatively recent times, means in Poitevin a goose.”

“Oh,” said Vaudès, smiling.

“There is a legend connected with it,” the chevalier went on. “The children of a great magician, then head of the house, once assumed the form of geese to escape the Northmen, and ever after the ganders of the flock, which increased and multiplied whenever a son was born to the family, walked triumphantly before their mates; but when a girl, the geese went first, unless indeed the child were destined by heaven to become a nun, and then one goose, who never laid, and led a solitary life and often fasted——”

The legend, which the chevalier related with profound respect and dignity, was interrupted. Espérance perceived that he was beginning a story, and she stopped singing to cry, "Monsieur, monsieur, do not go on till I come," hurried over the slippery landing, and fell headlong, rolling down step by step to the bottom before either of the men who had rushed to catch her could reach the foot of the stairs.

Vaudès snatched up the little senseless heap; he was as pale as death, and the chevalier hardly less trembling. Geneviève had heard the cry of both as the child slipped, and ran in. Vaudès could not speak; he turned and held Espérance to her with a look of speechless anguish.

"She has fallen?" said Geneviève, white and startled, but with all her wits about her. "Little one, art thou hurt? Where is it?"

The bruises on the fair, blue-veined brow were only too sufficient an answer. Geneviève's voice did not reach the dulled ear. Espérance lay unconscious in Vaudès' arms.

"Let me fetch the Marquise," said the chevalier, recovering himself a little, and regarding Madame de Maupas as the sovereign remedy for perplexity and trouble.

"No," said Vaudès, suddenly and sternly; "we want no strangers. I will lay her on her bed, wife, and fetch Dr. Malet."

"Do so," said Geneviève, knowing that to occupy

him would be the best thing for him, though he could hardly stand from agitation. "I will have her undressed by the time he comes. Do not try to rouse her, Jacques."

"Women have tenfold more composure in an emergency than men," said the chevalier to himself. "I shall go and tell the Marquise what has happened. The poor little angel," he added sadly, as Vaudès carried her into the next room. "In one instant too."

All the rest of that day and through the night Geneviève and Vaudès watched the child lying insensible and faintly breathing—so faintly. Very little could be done; there was nothing to occupy their hands and break the heavy, tedious hours. The doctor had come and told them it was impossible to say what injury had been done, nor could he suggest any remedies. He was an ignorant man, and knew very little beyond setting broken bones, which in the late stormy times he had learned to treat by dint of practice. For other things he had one or two strong drugs which he ordered abundantly in all cases. Fortunately Espérance could not swallow them.

"The child will die, citizen," he had said; "if she could take my remedies I might save her, but as it is—" and he shrugged his shoulders and went away. Sick children were not in his line.

As the grey, chilly dawn broke and showed Vaudès and Geneviève sitting wan and motionless by the bed, and the colourless features of Espérance lying on the

pillow, with her dark hair rough and loose, all the bitterness of death caught him in its grip. His child, his one darling, the one creature in whose eyes he was perfect, was passing away from him, out of sight, touch, reach—going where? What would she be a few hours later?—anything?—nothing? In any case invisible, lost to him, never to sit on his knee and chatter to him any more, never to need him again. He bowed his head and wrestled dumbly with despair. Madame de Maupas, glided in with a kind, pitying look.

"I could not sleep for thinking of the dear child," she whispered to Geneviève, of whose grief she naturally thought more than that of Vaudès, who was only the father, not the mother. "She has not spoken?"

Vaudès looked up. "She is dying," he said hoarsely, with such terrible despair in voice and face that Madame de Maupas started in unutterable pity.

"God help you, my poor friend!" she exclaimed involuntarily.

Vaudès dropped his face into his hands again, and the dumb anguish of his very attitude was so eloquent that Geneviève rose up, moved by an impulse she could not control.

All through the night she had been pondering what to do. Espérance would die; would he suffer more or less if he knew that she was not his child? Would he ever forgive the deceit? She hesitated no longer. "What does it matter about me," she thought, "so

long as he is spared anything? If he knew the truth, surely he would not——”

She rose and stood by him, laying her hand upon his shoulder. He put up one of his and grasped hers hard.

“Jacques, I want to tell you something,” she said.

“Another time,” he answered, as if each word cost an effort.

“No, now, Jacques.”

“Hush! the child is opening her eyes,” said Madame de Maupas; “moisten her lips.”

Geneviève did so. Vaudès, who had started erect, was gazing at the little face, breathless; he could not steady his hand sufficiently to hold the cup.

“She is conscious,” said Madame de Maupas. “Be careful, I beseech you, my friends; do not excite her. Let me speak to her. My little girl!”

But it was neither to her nor to Geneviève that the wistful eyes of Espérance turned. “Gentil Rossignolet, mesdames,” she murmured, taking up her thoughts just where they had been when she fell; “father!” and smiled at him, and then, as he hid his face on the bed, she moved her little hand to touch his head, dissatisfied until she could see his face.

“Father,” she repeated, with fuller consciousness, “why do you look so tired?”

“This child will live; your doctor is no prophet, my dear friends,” said Madame de Maupas, smiling, though with moist eyes; “and if I were in your place I should dismiss him, and trust to nature and yourselves.”

CHAPTER VIII.

ESPÉRANCE recovered, as Madame de Maupas predicted, but her convalescence was slow and anxious, nor did she ever regain her rosy, country look. She grew very much, losing the lovely rounded curves of early childhood, and she remained long tired and languid, declining active employment, and no longer able to accompany Vaudès wherever he went, preferring to stay indoors and play with Paul, or even to sit by Geneviève's side, learning to knit and hem, or to write in a copy-book and read under Paul's instructions. He had the precocious delight in study not uncommon in delicate children, and was eager to impart all he knew to his playmate. Hitherto Espérance had shown small inclination to learn, but now that she could not amuse herself actively, she was a more willing scholar.

It was a bitter disappointment to Vaudès that the healthy, merry child should be thus altered; he did not want her to be diligent or quiet or anything but what she had been, but he knew that it would be long before the effect of such an illness could be shaken off, and,

besides, it was inevitable that she should grow older, though he would like to have kept his baby as a baby, and after all she was regaining strength, however slowly. What no one remarked was that, on the other hand, Geneviève was losing it. The great struggle which she had gone through when she nerved herself to tell that secret which still remained untold, the broken nights which followed, and the strain of heart which had filled all these past years, combined to exhaust her. She had been profoundly unhappy. "It has been of no use," she often thought to herself, fancying that she was much less important to her husband than was really the case, but forced to carry about the burden with which she had laden herself, without an audible sigh. She hardly thought of what she had done as wrong; it appeared to her rather as a plan that had failed and cruelly punished her by failing. Every day she got a little more tired in mind and body, with a little less spirit for the day's work. Now and then a momentary sad wonder crossed her that no one noticed how tired she was, but as they did not she said nothing.

The illness of Espérance brought her a good deal into contact with Madame de Maupas. Vaudès saw that the Marquise knew from long experience how to deal with sick children, and if she had been an aristocrat twice over he would gladly have welcomed her in those trying days when Espérance seemed to go back rather than make progress, and nothing which he could advise amused or soothed her. Both he and Geneviève turned

to her gladly if at such times she appeared—Vaudès, because he was at his wits' end with anxiety, and forgot everything but that his child was suffering, and Geneviève because the constant attendance on the child whom she did not love, and who absorbed all her husband's thoughts, wearied her intolerably. The chevalier too was invaluable with his games and his stories, and Paul was always welcome to Espérance. He would sit on her bed and chatter to her, though usually a silent child even with his mother, paint pictures for her, and show her how to plait straw boxes, and make a hundred trifles with which he had learned to employ himself, and the sight of Espérance's brightening face made Vaudès too happy for him to cavil at the cause, even though he foresaw with annoyance that such an intimacy as this could not be later broken off. He was ashamed of himself, but he was no Brutus where his child was concerned.

Madame de Maupas had a certain liking for him, and admitted that he had no resemblance to the type of demagogue, ragged and insolent, common among his party, and she wondered why Geneviève appeared so sad and spiritless. She certainly had a kind husband. There must have been heavy troubles in her life, even beyond that horror of the Revolution and her husband's party, which was easily perceived, and which was a bond between her and the Marquise, though they rarely touched on the subject. Geneviève was too loyal to Vaudès to hint that she could blame him, and her

habit of caution made her avoid all dangerous topics, but in those quiet moments when the two sat together while *Espérance* slept or was amused by Paul, they could hardly help falling into confidential talk; unlike as they were by rank and education, circumstances brought them strangely near one another. Neither had any intimate friend in *Valentré*; the *Marquise* was the only lady who had yet returned there, and *Geneviève* had made no more acquaintances here than at *Lyons*, for not only did the increasing unpopularity of her democratic husband isolate her, but the sense of a secret which must be kept from every one cut her off, from friendships. Sometimes she spoke of her boy, and *Madame de Maupas* noticed how much more this child seemed to have been to her than *Espérance* was. "But that is natural," she thought, recollecting her own Paul, "a boy is always more to a mother than a girl," and once she said, "Had you no other child than your little son?"

"Yes, a dear little girl," answered *Geneviève*, for once off her guard.

"Older or younger than *Espérance*?"

"Madame, I—I do not know what you mean," stammered *Geneviève*, greatly startled.

"I must have misunderstood; I fancied you meant you had had three children."

"No, madame, certainly not," answered *Geneviève*, with such unnecessary decision that it deepened the surprise of *Madame de Maupas*, who looked at her

pale disturbed face, and thought, "There is some mystery."

"The loss of your boy must have gone very hard with your husband," she said; "how fond he seems of this little *Espérance*!"

"He is," *Geneviève* answered with a deep, stifled sigh, which did not escape the ear of her listener.

"Children are such a bond in married life," said *Madame de Maupas*, rather experimentally.

"Not always," was the reply of *Geneviève*, and the look which flitted over her face told a great deal.

They were sitting in the garden behind the house, niched into an angle of the town wall. There was an arbour, and a few trees, whose tops rose above the massive fortification; more than once, in days of buoyant health, *Espérance* had climbed high enough in them to look down on the river rushing below, the towered bridge, and the *Saldanhac* woods, with a wide outlook of crags and vineyards and more distant hills. A plaster statue of the Republic stood in the middle of the garden, which *Vaudès* had set there. He had given *Espérance* a nosegay that morning; she was so fond of flowers that even at the time when she was almost too ill to notice anything they would win a smile from her, and she would lay her cheek on them, calmed and pleased. She and Paul had been sitting for some time at the foot of a bank of turf sloping up to the walls, arranging and tying up the bouquet. The two mothers watching them saw them rise and go gravely up to the

statue, while Espérance said, "Now, Paul, let us make an offering to the dear, good Republic, who protects us against the wicked aristocrats who would make slaves of us, and against the cruel princes and kings that want to give France back to them. You put the flowers in that vase, and I will sing," and in her pretty, clear voice, still a little weak from illness, she began to sing that *Ça ira* which was associated with all the worst crimes of the Revolution.

"This is too much," exclaimed Madame de Maupas, almost violently, and stopping her ears. "Paul, come here this moment."

Both children came, equally astonished. Geneviève was as pale as the Marquise, who, however, immediately turned to her with a smile of kind apology, though the tears were hanging on her eyelashes, and said, "Forgive me, but those horrible words—and to see my son!—But these children are so happy as not to understand."

"What have we done, mamma?" asked Paul, wonderingly.

"Listen, my boy; that Republic which you are fêting drove us out of France and cost your father's life and your own fortune, and as I fled with you from our burning château in the darkness I heard the wretches who set it on fire and murdered your father sing that very *Ça ira*. Do you understand why I say that Paul de Maupas cannot, even in child's play, do honour to the Revolution?"

"Yes, mamma. But what is the Revolution?"



Esperance said, 'Now, Paul, let us make an offering to the dear good Republic.'
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So intense was the horror for that tremendous convulsion felt by those who suffered from it, that Madame de Maupas had never touched on it with Paul, scarcely even with the chevalier. The boy really did not know anything about it. His mother looked at Geneviève. Paul, seeing her hesitate, was the more curious.

"My child, if you were older—" She paused; a generous desire to say nothing which could hurt the pale woman at her side, or embitter Paul in future days against his countrymen, restrained the words on her lips and prompted another reply.

"Well, you can understand this. The Revolution has altered everything; it has destroyed all distinctions between man and man. Henceforward the only difference will be between the ignorant and the educated."

"And the good republicans will govern instead of the bad aristocrats," said Espérance. "Papa says so."

"Child, be silent!" broke in Geneviève, a red spot coming to her cheeks. She felt as if Espérance had been speaking blasphemy against her own order.

"She does not know what she is saying," said Madame de Maupas.

"No, she does not," returned Geneviève, casting a singular look upon the child, and Madame de Maupas, who had recovered her usual gaiety, drew the little girl towards her and said, "Listen, my little one; you do not think Paul or me wicked."

"No," said Espérance, with wide eyes of wonder.

"Nor M. de Colombe, who is so kind to you."

N

"Oh no."

"And yet we are aristocrats."

"Are you?" said Espérance, contemplating her with mingled astonishment and incredulity. "But why are you?"

"Because we were born so," laughed Madame de Maupas; "we could not help it."

"But you would if you could," said Espérance, with conviction. "And you are all good."

"You see there are good and bad people everywhere. There are some good aristocrats, and it might be possible to find fault with a few republicans," said Madame de Maupas, with irony which she could not quite suppress. "True. Run away, little one. Happy child," she added, turning to Geneviève, "her father is her ideal. And who could wish it otherwise?"

No smile came to Geneviève's lips. She took up her needles and began to knit rapidly.

"But there must be difficulties," the Marquise went on, "since you do not feel alike on certain points."

"Ah, madame, he does not scoff and blaspheme as some of his party do, and I have taught her to pray; but to think that she has never seen a church open, nor heard mass!" exclaimed Geneviève. "Why is it that when, as we hear, some priests are allowed to officiate in Paris, and other towns,"—she paused an instant, recollecting painfully how Vaudès had taken this news,—“we have none here—none to bless a marriage, nor hear a confession, nor give the last sacraments?"

"But that will not continue. M. de Colombe,—you know he gathers up news out of the air he breathes," said Madame de Maupas, smiling,—“he tells me that one of your Valentré priests is to be here immediately, the Abbé Roussel I think he called him. Perhaps he would take Paul for a pupil; he is too old for my teaching, nine his next birthday—we have already been here nearly three years!—and as for the attempts of M. de Colombe, they result in the history of Clovis, or in reading his romance or his tragedies.”

“A priest about to return!” repeated Geneviève, with emotion which surprised her companion, to whom it had been chiefly interesting on her son’s account. She was no sceptic, like too many Frenchwomen at that period, but she was not what she would have called *dévot*e, and she smiled a little to see what a vast importance the news had for Geneviève. She had never considered religion so absolutely needful for people who lived in the world; she had attended mass and shown due respect to ecclesiastics; but she thought that people called to a truly devout life went into the cloister, and the glistening eyes and thankful emotion of her companion surprised and almost amused her, although perhaps she felt a glimmering perception that Geneviève saw further and deeper than she did.

Geneviève watched in unspoken anxiety for the next news. To her the return of the Abbé Roussel was the one great public event, and she would have said that the *coup d'état* of a few months before, which had been

in fact the death-blow of the Republic, was quite unimportant in comparison. But for that blow, however, St. Martin's church would certainly still have been closed. Bonaparte was now all-powerful, though still called only First Consul; his conciliatory conduct to the clergy had won thousands of people who had hitherto opposed everything connected with the Revolution, and he well knew that the strength thus gained made it worth while to defy the large party enraged by his policy. Who could lift a protest with any chance of being heard against the supporter of the Pope, the victor of Marengo and Hohenlinden?"

It was not long before the excitement in Valentré told that St. Martin's was reopened. Only one priest was allowed to return, until the popular feeling had been tested; but manifestly the general feeling was one of joy, and though a small party held sullenly aloof, the general public flocked to attend the first mass heard in Valentré for nearly twelve years. During all that time the inhabitants had been absolutely deprived of all offices of religion, and had seen heaped upon the Christian faith throughout France every gross and disgusting insult which men could devise to offend believers and insult their God. The sense of this had lain like a nightmare on many not especially devout, while to earnest Christians it had been a horror and a sin beyond words. It was with a rebound of relief that Valentré saw the doors of its chief church open, and heard the bells ring again from its tower.

But some in Valentré felt very differently. Geneviève knew that Vaudès meant to absent himself all that day; the settled gloom on his face told her only too plainly how he regarded this restoration of religion, and she knew it would grate harshly if his wife were seen at St. Martin's. But a stronger feeling than even her love for him came in; she had sickened and craved for the holy offices of which she had been so long deprived, for spiritual counsel and pardon, and she would not be kept away. There was something else on which she was determined.

"Jacques," she said, with the needless abruptness of a timid person who had wound herself up to say something which costs a great effort, "I am going to mass to-morrow, and I shall take Espérance."

"As you will for yourself," he answered, "you must go your own way as usual; but my daughter shall learn no catechism but *les Droits de l'Homme*."

"Espérance must go with me," she repeated, flushing red; "she is a child of the Church; she has been baptized; the Church has a right over her."

"The Church!" he repeated, with fast rising anger. "Bah! And when was she baptized? this is the first I ever heard of it," and, as Geneviève hesitated, alarmed and confused, "But I need not ask; your Père Thomas would not fail to be at hand."

"That is to say, he never shunned risking his life for his flock, even when to venture among us meant death."

If he were not a priest you would be the first to call him a hero."

Vaudès knew this was true; but he hated priestcraft so intensely that it blinded him to the nobility which otherwise he would have been the first to acknowledge.

"I know him as an intolerant bigot," he answered, with keen vindictiveness, "a priest to his finger-ends. *Espérance* shall fall into the hands of no *calotin*. She is a child of the Revolution."

"Yes; you would have her grow up like those shameless women at Lyons! You would have her join in vile songs and hear vile words without a blush, and see the carts go by to the Place Bellecour without a tear, as I have seen girls not sixteen do! It would be ten thousand times better if she had died six months ago then," Geneviève went on vehemently.

"*Espérance* is my daughter and will go my way."

"She is just as much my daughter as yours," retorted Geneviève, with a strange look which he recalled long afterwards; "or does your Revolution, which you say gives equal rights to every one, make children their father's property only?"

Vaudès had never seen her so moved.

"The child shall choose," he said, after looking at her for a moment. "*Espérance*, come here."

"Oh, she will go with you? I do not need to be told that," answered Geneviève, bitterly.

Espérance came at the call.

"Listen, my daughter," said Vaudès. "Your mother

is going to-morrow to a place they call a church; there will be a great many people there, listening to a man talking in a tongue they do not understand. Will you go with her, or with me to buy a new cow, and drive in the *patache*?"

A drive in the *patache* was a great temptation, yet she hesitated.

"I want to see what a church is," she said. "Paul and Madame de Maupas, and the chevalier are all going to-morrow."

"How! you will not go with father?" said Vaudès, so keenly disappointed that his dark face changed colour. Geneviève said nothing. Her sudden energy was spent. Espérance looked at her and then at him.

"Yes, yes, papa, I will go with you," she cried, putting her arms round his neck; "take me in the *patache*."

He kissed her and set her down. This clash had been exceedingly painful, and he foresaw others, perhaps worse. As Geneviève had protested, Espérance was as much her child as his; he could not separate them if he would.

Nevertheless, he started early the next morning, with Espérance very happy by his side, for the distant farm whither he was bound. Little as he could once have expected it, Vaudès had become a "notable," a proprietor, and found his possessions prosper and increase, though he helped others abundantly, especially exiled friends. To have been a notable four or five

years earlier would perhaps have cost him his head, for this class had been peculiarly obnoxious to the Jacobins, as owning property and being better educated than most of themselves, and he felt his position inconsistent with his politics; yet why not own what he was ready to share? and one day his daughter would be well dowered, and marry a good patriot.

He stayed away all day, and the child, merry and excited by the change, showed no fatigue until towards evening, when she suddenly began to cry and say her head ached. It was only that she was over-tired, but since her fall a headache had been terror to Vaudès, and he was in despair at the thought of the long drive home; nor was the *fermière*, from whom he had bought the cow, consoling.

"Ill, you say, and keep her all day in such a sun!" she said, holding up her hands; "a man with a young child is like a peacock with its chick, sure to drag it about till it drops."

Vaudès felt so rebuked and miserable that he could hardly face Geneviève, though Espérance had slept all the way home, and only looked rather tired and pale when he led her indoors. Geneviève made no comment on his humble avowal of having knocked the child up, but put her at once to bed. He asked nothing of what she had done that day, and did not guess that she had not gone to St. Martin's after all. The struggle of the evening before and a sleepless night had exhausted her. Hardly had the *patache* rolled away over the bridge when a sick

dizziness came over her, and she could only stagger blindly to her bed and sink down upon it. Everything seemed slipping away from her; an agony of fear possessed her that she should die alone, unconfessed, her secret untold. She could not call for help, nor would any one have heard if she had called. She heard steps and a crutch on the stairs,—Paul could now descend with the help of his mother's arm,—and she thought she distinguished M. de Colombe's voice. So he was going too; she should not have expected that, she thought vaguely, unaware that he regarded this attendance at public worship as a respect due to that altar which supported the throne. It had a political significance to the chevalier, and he felt it a duty to himself and his order to be present, though he had rarely attended mass in old days; not that he was a *philosophe*, but he had just as much and no more faith than was usual in men of his rank and time. Religion did not govern their conduct or raise their morals; but the most sceptical would have sent for a priest on his death-bed. It was such men as he who helped to make men like Vaudès, with their almost fierce conviction and passionate earnestness, unbelievers.

The sounds died away, and all was still. Some one came into the shop, a customer, or perhaps a thief. Geneviève tried to rise and could not. She heard an impatient knock to summon her, and then the door shut. People went by in the street, probably to St. Martin's. The first mass must be over by now. And

she could not go! "I must be very ill," she thought; but by-and-by the dizziness went off, and by the afternoon she found herself able to move and get something to eat. Madam de Maupas came in, all touched and glowing.

"I could not have believed how much it would move me," she exclaimed; "it was a lovely sight! such tears of joy, and a crowd—*un monde fou*! Every one was saying that things would go better for as now we have God among us again. Paul was enraptured, and as for the chevalier, he cried like a child. But where were you? Your husband would not go, of course; but you and Espérance? We should have come for you both, only we were a little late—such a journey for Paul!—and I believed you gone."

"I could not go," answered Geneviève, and it was like a cry of pain.

When she heard why Geneviève had not gone, she looked grave.

"You should see a doctor, my poor friend," she said.

"Dr. Malet? we have no other."

"Heaven forbid! But does your husband not see you are ill?"

"He is used to it."

"Exactly. You have too much to do; you ought to have a servant. Ah, just Heaven! what am I saying? an *officiouse*, I mean," she laughed, using the name which servants insisted on, now that anything implying service was held to be an affront to the dignity of man.

"No, no, madame; I am glad I have plenty to do, I should die if I had not," answered Geneviève with sick impatience, and again the thought crossed the mind of the Marquise, "This woman has some mystery in her past."

She made an opportunity for meeting Vaudès next day, and observed, "I hope your wife is better?"

"Better!" repeated Vaudès.

"How! you do not know how ill she was yesterday?"

"Ill! no, she did not tell me."

"I have been indiscreet then. But you must have seen how pallid and thin she grows," said Madame de Maupas, knowing perfectly well he had not, and desirous to punish him for his blindness.

Vaudès was anxious enough now. He sought Geneviève and reproached her, masculine fashion, for not having complained, not guessing her thought that if he had loved her there would have been no need to complain, he would have seen it for himself. He insisted on fetching the doctor, who prescribed as usual, in a jovial tone, as if people only had to take his drugs to get well. Geneviève quietly threw them away, but though she escaped being made worse by them, something else was draining her strength; she knew she was growing weaker, though she denied it to Vaudès and every one who questioned her, and got through the day's work as usual, at a cost only known to herself.

CHAPTER IX.

THE Abbé Roussel was middle-aged, with a loose, large frame, much more active than could have been expected, a large face, a high complexion, and a strong local accent. He was of very humble birth, and would have appeared a mere peasant but for a kind, sensible mouth, a certain air of authority, and the steady, full look of his grey eyes. He had led a life full of danger for over a dozen years, and he was very glad that it was possible for an ecclesiastic to take the new oath to the State, devised by Napoleon, without disloyalty to his priestly duty. When the Terror crushed public worship he remained in Valentré, lodging concealed in a granary, where he set up an altar, round which a few faithful worshippers would come under cover of darkness, until he was denounced, and barely escaped, more fortunate than two others, equally devoted, who were arrested and guillotined. After that he went from village to village in the wild hills of Quercy, taking his life in his hand to minister to the sick and dying, baptizing and marrying here and there; but he was too well known

in Valentré to venture back until persecution was over. The Abbé Roussel had no natural love of hardship and danger; he met them because it came in the way of duty, without hesitation and with unconscious heroism, because it never occurred to him to do otherwise, but he did not feel the austere joy in discomfort and suffering which upheld Père Thomas; he had a childlike pleasure in returning to a settled home, even such a humble lodging as his present one, and in the little offerings of his flock, and it was a great joy to him to be welcomed back, and see old friends come round him, though there were tragical empty places, and grievous stories to hear. He looked radiant as he went about, though the ravages committed on his church made him shake his head gravely and wonder whence the money for repairs was to come, not to speak of a decent amount of decoration. The first days of his return were crowded with occupation. Besides saying two masses he heard innumerable confessions, baptized children, and there were parochial matters to organise as unostentatiously as possible, and difficulties to smooth away. By the end of the fourth day he was thankful when late evening brought a respite, and he could walk alone round the church and think over past and present quietly.

He stood still before a side chapel, and looked up at the windows, where only a few fragments of the noble painted glass which had once filled it remained. It was at that altar he had said the last mass celebrated before the church was closed. There had been the

deluge since then! The church had been used as a storehouse; the organs, the carved stalls, had been broken up; the relics which had been the glory of Valentré were thrown out and burned while the crowd howled the *Marseillaise*! And then he thought of his earlier life and of his ordination; he vividly recollected what a trembling seized him as he left his place to make those vows which would set him apart for ever, and divide his old life and his new one as with an impassable gulf. "Scis illos esse dignos?" the bishop had asked, and then came the reply of the archdeacon who presented the candidates, declaring that as far as human weakness allowed it to be known, he knew and attested that these candidates were worthy, and the bishop responded, "Deo gratias!" and the august ceremony went on. As he recalled all this the Abbé Roussel stood lost in humble self-examination. To him his life since then appeared full of failures; at the best he had hardly done that which it was his duty to do. If others had done as much, very likely he would have thought it admirable; as it was, he found nothing praiseworthy or remarkable about it. He knelt and prayed, and then rising turned to shut the church, when he perceived a woman sitting on a step and leaning against a pillar. She looked weak and ill, and going up to her he asked her name.

"Geneviève Vaudès!" he repeated. "You are in trouble? you came perhaps to confess?"

"I came too late, Father; you had left the confessional,

and I dared not ask you to return—you have had so many penitents to-day.”

“I am ready to hear you, my daughter.”

“I cannot stay,” she answered hurriedly; “my husband will be returning, and it takes me so long to get back, I walk so slowly.”

She spoke in short, panting sentences; the effort of going up the long flight of steps leading to the church had painfully quickened the beating of the feeble heart.

“I must not make Vaudès angry. If he should forbid me to come here!”

“Is he unkind?”

“Oh, no, not unkind. He does not understand what it is to me, that is all. I must go, Father.”

She began to move hurriedly towards the door. In her heart she dreaded to confess, even while longing to do it. What would become of her if the abbé told her she must reveal her secret? And she felt almost sure he would declare she must not die with it untold. He walked by her side. “I will see you at your own house,” he said.

“No, no—Vaudès——”

“It will not be difficult to find an excuse,” he said with a smile; “even a priest may enter your shop, I suppose. At what hour will it be best to come?”

“Any afternoon,” she answered, between submission and reluctance, and then they parted and she dragged herself home.

The next day *Espérance*, sitting in the shop to give notice if any customers came, saw a broad-shouldered man in a looped-up hat and a rusty cassock come in. It was a costume altogether unknown to her, and something in his aspect struck her as novel also. She sat and gazed curiously at him while he stood looking round. Some of the cabinets and carved chairs told him strange tales; he had seen them in far other places.

"Shall I call mamma?" asked the child. He had not noticed the little figure, and started, smiling kindly as he perceived whence came the little voice.

"You are not Madame Vaudès' daughter?" he asked, with visible surprise; for this slender, fair child, too thin and angular for beauty, especially for the taste of the time, when plump, short, dimpled limbs were the fashion, but with an unmistakable look of refinement and distinction, was almost as unlike Geneviève as Vaudès, whom he had already remarked. Those who always saw her did not particularly observe this want of resemblance, but to his fresh eye it was very striking.

"Yes," she answered; "I will call her."

The voice and accent were those of the upper classes. The former she had inherited; the latter she owed to Paul and Madame de Maupas. She laid down something which she had held and went away. The abbé advanced to the counter at which she had been sitting, and saw that it was the miniature of a young officer, a frank, proud, handsome face.

"Surely a De Saldanhac," he thought; "I seem to remember those features. How came that here? Alas! how came half these things here?" and he looked round sadly.

Espérance returned from the kitchen. "Mother will come directly, monsieur; she is making the soup, but she says she will come."

"There is no hurry. Tell me where you got this, my child."

"It was in a drawer of that bureau, a dear little drawer that we did not know of. Papa said I might have everything I could find in the bureau, because, you know, he thought he had taken everything out; but I looked and looked, and I saw a little button and pushed, and the drawer flew out, and there was a necklace in it and this. See, monsieur."

"And which do you like best?" asked the priest, patting the child's head with his large hand.

"I—think—the picture," said Espérance, reflectively. "Yes, I like the picture best."

She looked earnestly at it, while the string of coral beads hung neglected over her arm.

"And do you think your father will let you keep them?"

"Oh, yes, father always does as he says."

"A good character," said the abbé to Geneviève, who came in as the child spoke, but she only cast a frightened glance at him; to her the words only suggested what was stern and inflexible in Vaudès.

"I will attend to the shop; go and play with Paul," she said to Espérance, who made a pretty salutation to the priest, and ran away with her treasures.

It seemed as if courteous manners came to her by nature. The abbé looked after her well pleased. He had purposely avoided speaking to her in the character of a priest on this first occasion, but he thought of her as one of those young souls for whom he should have to give account. He stood at the counter, and had any one come in he was there to buy something from the pale woman sitting behind it, but to these two the moment was a solemn one. Never since she left Lyons, nearly nine years ago, had Geneviève been able to disburden her conscience to a priest, and there seemed so many troubles to tell, so many faults to confess, that she grew confused and hardly able to find words; and then there was the fear that Vaudès might return and be angry—Vaudès about whom she was so miserable. It was almost a shock that the abbé had no harsh condemnation for him when she had owned the story of their past, and told how he had revenged himself on the aristocrats, had joined hands with Challier and Barré, how he had no faith, and was the enemy of the Church. At one time such a story would have fired the abbé with indignation, but he had gone through so many experiences that he had grown lenient.

"Alas! if our blessed Lord can forgive the wounds His own people inflict on Him, we may well believe He will pardon those given by His enemies," he said, utter-

ing a thought grown only too familiar to him ; but it was beyond Geneviève. She only looked sad and uncomprehending. "Your husband does not seem a bad man," he went on ; "I hear of him as generous and strictly honest in all his dealings."

"Oh yes, yes."

"And tender to the needy and oppressed in his own class ?"

"In his own class—yes, Father."

"And a staunch friend ?"

"Indeed he is."

"And where, think you, will all this go when he dies ?"

"But I cannot tell," said Geneviève in great surprise, too entirely used to Père Thomas' view of her husband to understand what the abbé meant to suggest. "Père Thomas always said——"

"Let that be," said the abbé, with some impatience ; "be you very sure that where such qualities are, even among those who have sinned and deny their God, the Holy Ghost spreads His wings, whether we see them or not. Pray for your husband, and trust God to teach him."

Geneviève looked down, sighing. It seemed to her that this was lax doctrine, and that the less merciful teacher must be in the right. The narrow and hard doctrine of her Lyons confessor impressed her much more than the generous view of Abbé Roussel. She understood it better ; it seemed safer to her.

"But you have some trouble beyond all this?" he said presently.

"How do you know that, Father?" she answered, with a scared look. She had not yet had courage to tell the secret which underlay her life. It would have to be told, she knew, but—

"It is not difficult to see," said the priest, and waited.

"It—it is not a sin," she protested; "Père Thomas would have told me if it had been a sin; he—he knew what I had done."

Still the abbé waited, and the power of his silence forced her to speak.

"I had another child after my husband came back," she faltered; "it died while he was in Paris, and just then I heard of an orphan baby in Les Récluses—" She dropped her voice still lower, and looked fearfully round, and the abbé came a step nearer to listen with quickened interest while she hurried out her confession. "Father Thomas did not blame me," she said again as she ended, looking half defiantly at the very grave and thoughtful face of the abbé, who made a little gesture as if putting aside that point altogether. "Oh, Father, do not tell me I must tell my husband! I cannot, indeed I cannot."

Her voice broke in wild supplication.

"I have not said so," he answered, for he was of a slow and cautious nature, a true peasant in that matter, and did not see his way.

She kneeled down for absolution, and her heart was lightened, though she trembled for what decision he might come to.

He had another visit to pay before going back to his lodging. Madame de Maupas had written to ask if he would give her son some instruction—religious and secular—in such leisure hours as he could command. They would be few, he knew, and he was quite aware that his stock of learning was limited, but he was also sure that there were certain things he could teach the boy, and that no other tutor could be found. He was inclined to accept.

Paul and Espérance were sitting in the deep window of the corridor through which he went, their heads close together; she was showing him the miniature. They stood up as he came by, and he spoke kindly to both, but his eye rested with special interest on Espérance. He was thinking of her even during his interview with the Marquise, and wondering what steps to take. It might be that to oblige Geneviève to own what she had done would be not only to wreck household peace, but to throw the child beggared on the world. Whether she had any relations left, or any able to support her, he did not know. At a calmer time the network of communication among the priesthood would have made it easy to learn from some curé at Lyons whether any La Tremblayes or Roche Hugons had returned, but now he could not say what parishes had yet got curés, nor whether these were orthodox or *intrus*,

for, to the great perplexity of scrupulous consciences, the Pope had acceded to Napoleon's demand, that of sixty bishops twelve should be of the constitutional party, in other words, republicans, and that priests who had taken the earlier oath to the State, though held as apostates by their brethren and many of their flocks, should continue their ministry. The scandal was immense; whole parishes refused to attend the masses of a *jureur*; stories were told of images that turned away at the sight of one. Here a flock was split into parties by the discord between a schismatic priest and a fervent young curate; there a bishop found himself sent to Coventry by his fellow-bishops. It was a wretched state of things, and the Gallican Church was almost worse off than it had been ten years earlier.

If the abbé had even known to whom to write, there would have been the risk of letters being opened, a bad habit largely practised during the Revolution, and even more so now that Napoleon held the reins of power; and moreover he could do nothing without the consent of Geneviève, since what he knew was under the seal of confession. For all practical purposes he knew nothing. The interview with Madame de Maupas was satisfactory, and he went homeward. At the corner of the street he met Vaudès, who would have gone by as if he did not see him, but the priest stopped him to say—

“You will not take it ill, I hope, if I visit your wife. She has not strength to come to me, and it is therefore my duty to seek her as I have done to-day.”

Vaudès stared at him, wondering what this apparent frankness meant. "She does as she likes," he answered.

"That is understood then. We meet in altered times, Jacques Vaudès."

"We do," returned Vaudès; "there is no edict now-a-days forbidding any but aristocrats to hold any ecclesiastical dignities from the smallest priory to an abbey."

"That and the ecclesiastical dignities were cleared away together, and some other grievances are gone too," said the abbé, his tone of irony changing to hearty satisfaction; "the *corvée*, the *gabelle*—there we feel alike, my friend."

"Ay, do I not recollect while I was a boy here your being fined for begging a bottle of wine for a sick man without a farthing in the world, because it defrauded Government that he did not buy it? And when you went to the bishop to plead for Jean Sévian, imprisoned for shooting a rabbit in his garden, did you not wait two hours in the ante-chamber, scorned by the lackeys, while priests with newer cassocks and finer names than you passed in? And had you not to come home after all without seeing monseigneur? Those were your Christian dignitaries!"

"True; you have a good memory," said the abbé, who still grew a little hot and red at the memory of this and other humiliations, for his temper was by no means naturally meek. "But, my friend, perhaps you

yourself would not wish the truth and justice of your cause to be altogether estimated by the conduct of some of its supporters?"

Vaudès looked up quickly and was silent.

"Perhaps we have more in common than you think," said the abbé, strong feeling ennobling his face; "we too know what it is to have our motives mistaken, our principles distorted, our own weaknesses a stumbling-block to those we would gain, our faults enfeebling the cause we most reverence and desire to uphold before all eyes. You and I disagree; we call our causes hostile to each other, yet we have the same end in view, and should know how to feel for one another."

He made a sign of farewell and passed on. Vaudès looked after him with a strange, doubtful, inquiring expression. "If any of the brood is honest—" he said to himself. "Yet what difference does that make after all?" Yet the shaft had gone home. Almost daily for years Vaudès had felt how bitter it was to have motives misconstrued, men less honest than himself to work with, views judged by the demerits of those who held them. The abbé had spoken not as ecclesiastic to layman, but as man to man. If Geneviève must have a priest, it was well it should be Roussel, not that Père Thomas, whose stern and narrow views had always exasperated Vaudès, who divined in him the instincts of a persecutor.

Vaudès went home and said nothing about the meeting; but, seeing Geneviève, he said tenderly "What

makes you so pale to-day, *mon amie*? Is there no way of sparing you a little?"

A deep flush came to her cheeks; she looked up gladly, and felt no more fatigue. Such a little thing from him made her happy, and satisfied her hungry heart. *Espérance* ran to show her treasure trove.

"Ay, ay, keep them," he said, with an indulgent smile; "they are not worth much, I take it. Stay, that is a *De Saldanhac* face."

"*Madame de Maupas* says it is some ancestor of hers, father; she wants it, but I shall only lend it now and then, for I like it so much. And she has a nephew called *Adrien*, just like it. He cannot come here because his father hates the First Consul, and will ask no favours from him."

"There are things in which one can sympathise with an aristocrat as well as a *calotin* it seems," said *Vaudès*, with his low, inward laugh, and went to close the shutters of the curiosity shop for the evening.

CHAPTER X.

THE joy that religion was no longer proscribed, and the relief of having unburdened her mind, seemed to pour new life into Geneviève, and if during the next three years her health declined, it did so very slowly and imperceptibly, though none the less surely. Had the Abbé Roussel understood her real state, he probably would have settled with himself that the truth respecting *Espérance* must be told; but, occupied with parochial matters which pressed on his attention, and unable to see his way with regard to her future, he put it aside for the time, and this again was a great relief to Geneviève, who considered that she had turned over all responsibility to him, and almost ceased to trouble herself about what she had done, though she was still conscious of a feeling of guilt towards her husband, and his affection for *Espérance* could never be anything but pain to her.

Oddly enough, though it did not in any way bring them together, *Vaudès* and the abbé suffered rather in the same way through those years, for the mayor

of Valentré had a past which he now desired should be forgotten, and the higher rose the star of General Bonaparte, as it was then the fashion to call the First Consul, the more ardent a partisan did the mayor become, and the less did he like the abbé or men of Vaudès' way of thinking.

"General Bonaparte" was doing his utmost to be the Pope's master, and the mayor of Valentré, Auguste Jobin, did not see why he should not lord it over his curé. Jobin was just such a mixture of vanity and despotism, of ignorance and exultation in a little brief authority, as the office of mayor in a small place seems especially apt to create. In his municipal scarf he thought himself a very magnificent three-tailed bashaw indeed, and every one who did not bow down to him, or had an independent opinion, became in his eyes a dangerous person, and one whom the interests of the State demanded should be kept under surveillance and thwarted on all occasions. The abbé knew how to manage him, ignored his insolence, and did not disdain a little temporising, by means of which he got his church repaired and avoided clashes over official ceremonies and the like; but Vaudès, too vehement and hot-blooded to constrain himself thus, felt as if he should suffocate in this atmosphere of repression and suspicion which seemed to be little freer or purer than that of the old times. Nay, it was even bitterer than of old to see the offices in the town filled up by favour instead of merit, and to

witness daily the exactions and tyranny of the agents of public subsistence, as they were called. He became marked as a dangerous man; timid friends drew back, cold looks were turned on him; only a little knot of Republicans stood by him, among whom he became a leader, and the mayor was not wrong in suspecting that there were discussed among them schemes for arresting the ever-rising power of Bonaparte, and checking the terrorism which the army was able to exercise. All over France such schemes were mooted by the fragments of the Jacobin party; but it was too scattered and prostrate to put them into effect. The Republic had no root in the heart of the people, and the country, thankful for time to breathe, was indifferent to any change of government short of the return of the Bourbons, while the army, which the Red party had always suspected and hated, was enthusiastically devoted to the young general who had led it from one brilliant victory to another. Events had long pointed to military rule; open resistance there could be none; it only remained to conspire. As time went on and Bonaparte was elected Consul for life, government became a dictatorship, the rule of one man, far too popular to be attacked, and all the more popular, so much had public opinion altered, for the implacable severity which he showed to those whom he called "the men of the September massacres." "The new saviour of the social order," Vaudès would say, quoting ironically from some Bonapartist news-

was therefore no small surprise to Geneviève when one afternoon he brought home a soldier, a stranger, as she thought, deceived by the uniform and martial air; and with her thoughts a hundred miles from anything connected with Lyons, she got up from her chair and waited to hear who it was.

"She has forgotten me," said the stranger with a laugh.

And then Geneviève knew who it was, and dropped on her seat feeling as if she were dying. Her terrified eyes sought Vaudès' face; but there was no look there such as she expected. He did not know—yet—not yet; but it must come.

"Why, wife, what startles you so?" he asked, concerned and surprised; and then he thought he knew the reason of her pallor and silence. No doubt the sight of his companion had suddenly recalled the savage and bloody scenes which she had witnessed at Lyons.

"Ah, ah, it makes a man of one to have been a soldier these thirteen years," said the new-comer, wagging his head with a self-satisfied smile; "first under the Republic, and then under the Little Corporal. Ah, there's a commander for you! When he joined the army of the Alps we had seen neither bread nor shoes for two years; we were starved, ill led, betrayed. What did he do? He hanged the purveyors who made their fortunes out of our misfortunes; he got us fed. The shoes had to wait, but the victories came fast enough—

Montenotte, Lodi, Arcole, Marengo—ten months were enough for that. Long live General Bonaparte, say I.”

He had thrown himself on a bench, and looked triumphantly from one to the other.

“Had the Republic no victories?” answered Vaudès; “did it not create four armies, win Valmy, conquer Nice and Savoy, seize the Dutch fleet, and force Spain to ratify all she had done? When your Bonaparte murdered the Republic he murdered his mother.”

“*Vingt mille bonsoirs!* what is that to what we have done since? A bottle of wine to drink the health of the General!”

Vaudès signed to Geneviève to fetch the wine, and she forced her shaking limbs to rise and obey, while he set two glasses on the table, but filled only his guest’s.

“Try my wine,” he said, and the soldier smacked his lips approvingly, and talked on about his adventures and the glory of Bonaparte, while Vaudès looked at him gloomily, remembering how he had been one of the loudest supporters of the Republic.

“You are here then with your regiment. Do you stay long?” Geneviève asked abruptly. It was the first thing she had said.

“March on to-morrow; no time in our trade to get stiff unless one falls on the field of battle, and if one fall bravely, why the General is sure to know it, and say a word of praise; he knows all his children. There was Vit-sans-peine—you recollect him? He wrote a letter

to the Little Corporal, asking that if he fell his mother might not starve, and sure enough he dropped nearly the first at Lodi ; and what does the General do but write himself to the old woman and promise a pension. Our colonel showed us the letter. There's a leader for you ! ”

“ A pension that brought in interest a thousandfold,” muttered Vaudès.

But his visitor went on with new fervour. Vaudès' face grew darker and darker. He had brought him in partly for old friendship's sake, but more to learn the feeling of the army. He found the ex-Jacobin heart and soul devoted to Bonaparte, one of thousands like him.

Suddenly the guest paused, as the door opened and Espérance came in, and paused surprised. She had been upstairs, and was not aware that a stranger was in the house.

“ My daughter,” said Vaudès proudly, drawing her to him, while Geneviève gasped for breath. “ So much for the news you gave me at Paris. Do you recollect ? ”

“ No,” said the man, staring at Espérance.

“ What ? not that my child had died ? You gave me a bad quarter of an hour, you rascal.”

“ Did I ? ” he answered, with a puzzled effort at recollection. “ I forget ; some one must have told me so. Yes, surely, I heard it just before I left Lyons. Let me see—who was it ? ”

“ Never trouble yourself to remember ; it was another

especially among the upper class, and Vaudès naturally watched with a double jealousy over the motherless girl who was growing up so fast, and was his one joy and treasure and chief perplexity. Some of the few close friends whom he had in Valentré had daughters, but somehow, as he perceived, they were not like Espérance; he did not wish her to resemble them, though they were the outcome of pure democratic training, and Geneviève had kept her apart, and she was not disposed to make friends with any of them. Best so, after all, he thought, even though it resulted in her spending most of her time with Madame de Maupas. Vaudès was anxious about her. She was much altered since Geneviève's death, far graver; her eyes were often full of doubt and questioning. With a priest's insight, the abbé guessed what was passing in her mind, but she did not confide her trouble to him, and his lips were sealed by only knowing her history in confession. He deeply regretted that he had let slip the chance of its being told, and reproached himself severely. But it was too late now. He could only take all the care of her in his power. Vaudès was much startled by his stopping him one day and telling him that, as her pastor, it was his duty to give her religious instruction, "even if you forbid it," he said, "but that I think you will not do."

"Monsieur, my child shall not be taught superstition," answered Vaudès; "but I thank you for straightforward dealing, which I should not have expected—"

"From a priest." The abbé completed the sentence with a smile. "But by your own principles she has a right to choose for herself. A girl sixteen her next birthday cannot be disposed of like an animal, a chattel. Have you not declared yourself in the tribune that every man has a right to do what he will, so long as it does not harm his country?"

"How do you know I said that?" answered Vaudès in surprise. "But to propagate superstition does harm the country and our fellow-men."

"Then freedom with you means that you are free to persecute, but not free to refrain from persecuting."

"Monsieur, I cannot speak to an ecclesiastic like you as I would to another. I respect you, but I abhor the system which you uphold. It is not the individual that we war against, but the institution. As for you, I acknowledge that in the end we desire the same thing—the happiness of our fellow-men. You too would rather wander with the poor outcast than sit crowned with roses on Olympus with the gods," said Vaudès, with a touch both of the southern imagery, which was natural to him, and of the mythological pedantry general among the republican orators of the day. But he meant every word he said.

"We only differ as to this. You mistake the means for the end in your schemes. Man does not live by bread alone; and you will never make him happy unless you make him holy," said the abbé as he left him.

"That man would almost make me a Christian," muttered Vaudès, looking after him as he strode away in his worn cassock. "If there were many such—But, bah! what does one in a thousand prove?" Vaudès could never quite understand the power which abode in the Abbé Roussel, and which, in fact, came not only out of his upright and devoted life, but because he had the strength proceeding from his being able to say, "*I know Him whom I have believed;*" nor did he guess how intensely the abbé longed and prayed that the tenderness and self-devotion which he recognised in Vaudès might be given one day to serve the cause of Christianity. If that time could come, he thought, it would be the most joyful day of his life. He prayed and waited, and would not be discouraged, inwardly esteeming this black sheep as a great deal whiter than were some orthodox members of his flock, who had no blotted past to repent of and find constantly cast against them; but he sometimes lost heart when he thought of Geneviève.

"If ever he knows what she did it will harden him once for all," he thought; "he will lay it down to her creed, not her weakness, and never ask himself what such a poor creature would have been without any faith at all. I could almost wish he might never know. What a blow for him, for the girl!"

Vaudès did not mean to yield in the matter of Espérance; but he had counted without realising that she too had a will and a voice in the matter. It was

She sat on the window-seat; the heavy curtains were not yet drawn, and the street without was full of twilight, making a dusky background, but the light of a lamp in the room fell on her drooping head, and the chevalier looking up was struck with the pensive grace of her attitude. He held the cards in his hand and forgot to deal.

"*Who* is it that child reminds me of?" he said, just as he had done years before. "She is certainly like some one I knew."

Espérance caught the words, and suddenly lifted her eyes, full of startled trouble. "Stay, I have it! But it is an astonishing likeness—that poor Alix de la Tremblaye—you must remember her, Marquise. She married a Roche Hugon, who was something of a cousin of yours. Yes, it certainly is Alix de la Tremblaye."

"I do not recollect her; it must be fancy, Chevalier," said Madame de Maupas, not at all partaking his excitement.

"What became of that Alix de la Tremblaye, monsieur?" asked Espérance, coming forward with a vivid flush on her cheeks. She had clasped her hands hard together, as she did when much moved.

"That I hardly know, my *rossignolet*; I think she was arrested,—*mon Dieu!* everybody was;—the remarkable thing is not to have been arrested. Yes, and doubtless she was guillotined."

"But where, monsieur, where?" asked Espérance

with vehemence, which surprised and almost displeased Madame de Maupas.

Although the chevalier was only her old friend and humble servant, she did not altogether like his attention being given to any one else, even Espérance.

"You have turned this little girl's head, by comparing her to a noble lady, Chevalier," she said lightly, but with a certain reproof in her tone.

"Ah, madame, it is not that; but may I not know where this lady was imprisoned?"

"At Moulins or Lyons, doubtless. The Roche Hugon estates are in the Lyonnais. Chevalier, why do you not deal?"

The chevalier started and obeyed, and Espérance slipped out of the room without answering Paul's questioning eyes, and shut herself into her own. By-and-by she came out, and found Vaudès sitting solitary, his head on his hand, the fire on the hearth extinguished. She came and put her arms round his neck with a long, clinging embrace.

"I will never grieve you again if I can help it," she murmured.

He felt how cold her lips and hands were, and saw that she was spent and wan, as if she had gone through some great strain of heart, and his own heart smote him, and he drew her on his knee. She leaned her head on his breast and whispered,

"How good you have always been to me!"

There was a world of feeling in look and tone.

"Good to you, my little daughter!" he said, beguiled into a smile; and then, grieved to think that she had been fretting over their alienation, he began to consider what pleasure he could give her.

"The day after to-morrow is your birthday, little one," he said, forcing a cheerful tone. "Tell me what I shall give you."

"I want nothing—nothing but to be with you."

"It is a long time since we went anywhere together," said Vaudès, giving an involuntary sigh to those days when he and his baby-daughter went everywhere hand-in-hand. "Would you like to make some little excursion?"

"Oh, I should!" exclaimed Espérance, raising herself eagerly. "Take me to Château Saldanhac."

Although living so near she had never seen the old home of Madame de Maupas.

"Château Saldanhac? Well, why not? On Sunday, then. So, I am going to have a daughter of fifteen!" He looked at her tenderly. "I wish you had your mother," he said; "a girl needs a mother."

"I want no one but you," she answered with unexpected vehemence.

"Hush, hush, child! you do not mean that," said Vaudès gravely, though he could not help feeling the words fall like balm on the wounds which had been making his heart ache. "You must not say that even to comfort me."

Espérance made no reply.

CHAPTER XII.

WHILE Geneviève lived she managed much of the business which Vaudès' farm and vineyard, as well as the shop, gave rise to with a shrewd, practical sense which is inborn in many of the women of her nation, and he left such matters to her in perfect security that all would go well. Now he had to look to them himself, and often he had his hands more full of work than he well knew how to manage. His strong love for his little property—that bit of soil which was his own—made all connected with it dear to him, and he would toil like any peasant on it; but he did not like buying and selling nearly so well, and underneath all the peace and prosperity of his present life lay the conviction that sooner or later he should have to give it all up and risk everything in a struggle to overthrow Napoleon, if only the moment would come when a blow could be struck at him without its turning to the profit of the Bourbons. His heart burned within him to see how France submitted to being drained of men and money to minister to the ambition of this soldier of

fortune, and to hear now of one republican, now another, exiled to the fatal swamps of Guiana, where, indeed, they must have found not a few priests and Royalists, sent there by the Jacobins in their day of power. He asked himself vainly how their wretched state could be bettered, and ground his teeth in impotent wrath to find that even his own party cared very little about it.

Here he and *Espérance* felt alike, and could speak openly; but he kept her as far as he could from all knowledge of his hopes and plans, lest one day she should find herself endangered as an accomplice; but she guessed that no small portion of his gains were transmitted to those exiles, and that he had enabled more than one to bribe his gaolers high enough to effect an escape. She asked no questions, even when he was absent for a day or two, as sometimes happened; but she was no longer child enough to accept such absences without speculating upon them. He was away on the evening following that of her confirmation, and she took her needlework and went, as usual, when left alone, to seek her friends on the first floor.

She found *Madame de Maupas* playing piquet with the chevalier, while *Paul* was looking on. It had been a bad day with him; the blue veins showed too distinctly on his fair brow, and his eyes were over-bright. The excitement of the previous day was telling on him. He held out his hand gladly to her, and drew her down beside him on the sofa. *Madame de Maupas* saw his

look of pleasure, and gave her a kind little smile. Espérance thought how charming she was, at once proud and gentle, the carriage of her head so noble, and her dark blue eyes so full of light. The chevalier sat opposite, wrinkled, elderly, spruce and airy, with his red heels, and his hair arranged in *ailles de pigeons*, devoted and adoring as usual.

"Check to the—king," said the marquise with a smile and a slight pause and emphasis, recalling how during the Revolution it had been made criminal to use the title, "Check to the Tyrant" being prescribed instead. "Alas! it seems one endless check to the king now-a-days. Our own in exile, the royal family of Spain enticed to Bayonne and forced to abdicate; all the crowned heads of Europe humbled before a *parvenu* Corsican, who calls himself Emperor of France."

"England has not submitted, mamma," suggested Paul.

"What consolation is that? You know, my son, how I detest England. Even this usurper has that much right feeling—he is not without that merit—England eager to humiliate us, whose pensioner she was in the days of the Grand Monarque."

"Quite so," said the chevalier absently, while he tried to divine the plans of his antagonist, and polish a couplet which was floating in his brain at the same time.

"But, mamma, she gave us a refuge," suggested Paul.

"You mean she threw her bounty to us as if we were beggars. It was the bitterest drop in our cup that we, even our royal master and the Comte d'Artois, were forced to accept her hospitality—the hospitality of the ancient enemy of our country."

This was a subject on which Madame de Maupas, like many other refugees, always got very hot.

"You must agree with me, Chevalier," she said.

"Madame, I never differ from you," he replied with a tinge of malice, while he took her queen.

"And a great fault it is in you, as I have often told you," she retorted, with indignation heightened by this unexpected disaster. "How did you do that, Chevalier? Are you sure it was fairly done?"

"Ah, madame," he answered, laying his hand on his heart.

"No; you would not take an unfair advantage of a lady," she answered, smiling and cooling down. "You belong to the days when people knew what good manners were, Chevalier, and that is why I like you."

M. de Colombe kissed her hand—a beautiful hand, with taper fingers turning up a little at the end.

"Little as we see or hear of society now, I perceive that there is no dignity left," she went on; "it will die with us of the old generation. One used to see dignity everywhere. It was in the air and bearing of the *noblesse*, of the clergy and magistrates—even in the dignities of the Tiers États, one saw it when they came up to Paris in '89; but now it and good manners—

le grand air—are all gone together, and there is nothing but confusion and turbulence on all sides. We shall have our children allying themselves with *roturiers* next.” But she spoke as if the suggestion were too absurd to be seriously entertained. “What the generation will be who have been brought up out of France I cannot tell; possibly less ill-bred than those brought up under the Empire.”

“We must adapt ourselves to the times we live in,” said M. de Colombe, to whom all times were much alike, so long as he had the neighbourhood of his friends, and money enough for his simple wants, and a luxury or two, such as scented snuff and perfumes.

To live without these would have made him feel himself in very barbarous times indeed.

“Adapt ourselves! What do you tell me?” exclaimed Madame de Maupas. And it was lucky for the chevalier that the Abbé Roussel just then came in, as he often did of an evening, and diverted her thoughts from the enormity which M. de Colombe had just uttered; but when every one had greeted him, and chess had been exchanged for boston, she resumed. “Do you hear what the chevalier says, M. l’Abbé? We are to adapt ourselves to the times, and live like honest bourgeois. Now and then on fine days we shall take a little walk, and on wet ones we shall sit by the fire, sleep a good deal to economize food and light, study the news in *Les petites Affiches* if a neighbour will lend it,—naturally we would not be guilty of the

extravagance of buying a newspaper,—or read a few pages of the *Lives of the Saints*.”

“Ah, madame, I could believe anything but that,” said the abbé, smiling.

“Nay, I am not *dévôte*, as you know, but I need not say I would not have the bad taste to speak lightly of sacred things before you, M. l’Abbé, had I remembered that I was speaking to a priest,” said Madame de Maupas, with a slight bend of graceful apology.

The abbé nodded, well aware that not every noble lady would have thought an apology necessary, especially to a country priest.

Paul and Espérance exchanged a sad and meaning glance. To these children, the one conscious that he was doomed to a short life, the other enthusiastic for a faith which had cost her already much, the smiling indifference of the chevalier and Madame de Maupas to what seemed to them all important was very strange and sorrowful. Probably the abbé thought so too. He preferred the open hostility of men like Vaudès to the well-bred toleration of religion which he found in some who called themselves Christians.

“And yet a good mother and true friend, kind-hearted too, and less rigidly aristocratic than many,” he was thinking, as he looked at the Marquise. “What would one have? She, and he too, are the outcome of their race and their time, and what beautiful women there were in those great families.”

He could not be quite indifferent to the charming

had toiled for, lived for, had so adored, was not his, had never been his, was an aristocrat, looked like one, felt like one, loved one.

"My God!" he exclaimed.

He did not know he had said it, or how that long-disused word sprang in this hour of mortal pain to his lips. The speechless agony in his face startled the chevalier out of his triumph. He began to understand a little what the revelation he had brought was to Vaudès.

"It is hard on you," he said compassionately.

Vaudès looked blankly in his face.

"Yes, I suppose so," he answered, in a dull, strange voice. "I—I understand now."

"These are some certificates," said the chevalier, hesitatingly.

Vaudès rallied his senses to read them, and went steadily through them, stopping now and then to recall some past event, some link.

"Faith! he takes it almost as well as if he were of gentle birth," thought the chevalier, watching him curiously. "'Tis strange I never thought how he would feel about it."

"Thanks, monsieur," said Vaudès presently, looking up. His deadly pallor was the more striking in so dark a face. "It is all quite clear. I do not wish my—that *Espérance* should be told to-night. Tell her what you will to-morrow."

The chevalier bowed as Vaudès went out as if to an

sad his life has been, how no one but myself understood what he was striving for and longing for. He had only me. Oh, if I could only tell him how I love him!"

They assured her he would return to her, but she knew better.

"Never!" she said, and yet she watched and listened in spite of her conviction, though with ever-increasing hopelessness. "Father! father!" she would cry to herself, and even the knowledge that Adrien knew there was now no barrier between them, and would return to seek her, could not still that heartache as she thought of Vaudès, desolate, wandering alone—who knew where?

Too heartsick to join in the conversation between Madame de Maupas and the chevalier, she was leaning against the window three evenings after Vaudès had left her. Suddenly with a suppressed cry she ran out of the room. In another moment she had crossed the street. She had seen aright; that dusky figure on the opposite side which she had perceived standing motionless was Vaudès. He had come back for one last look at the house which held his darling, though he had meant to depart again undiscovered.

"Father! father!" she cried, as she had done on the night of Geneviève's death, and clung round his neck.

His tears fell on her hair. "Ah, child!" was all he could say.

"How could you leave me?" she sobbed; "it broke

my heart. Take me with you; I am yours; I will go with you where you will."

He shook his head sadly. "Not mine, my dear, though you have my heart's love—that is yours wherever you are—but between us is a great gulf fixed."

"Ah, you saved my mother's life," she cried.

"I am glad of that; yes, I am glad of that. You do not shrink from me, little one?"

"Shrink from you! Ah, if I loved you well enough to put away the love of Adrien for your sake, can you ask that?"

"You did not know then that you—were a Roche Hugon?"

"I knew it well."

"How!" exclaimed Vaudès. "You too joined to deceive me!"

"Not that, father; no, oh no. She—Geneviève—told me how it was the night she died. I thought it was all fever-fancy; but little by little, whether I would or not, I knew it was true. I could not tell you. How could I? And since we loved one another so much, what difference did it make? And then, when Adrien came, was that a time to tell you anything? It would have been base then."

"You knew it; you let me believe you my daughter, and said no word."

"I loved you like one," said Espérance innocently.

"And I, how I have loved you, my little one!" he cried, his mood changing and melting. "Will any one

else ever do as much ? If I knew that, I think I could let you go. And you renounced your love for him ! for me who you knew was nothing to you ! ”

“ Everything,” said Espérance.

“ No, no, child ; be happy, go your way, and my curse on him if he is not worthy of you. Say my name to yourself sometimes ; in your prayers if you will. Farewell ! ”

“ Stay ! ” she cried, holding him fast ; “ where shall you go ? ”

“ Wherever I can help my friends best. This place is hateful to me now. I have nothing any longer to hold me back. Nay, let me go. I have no more courage left.”

“ Ah, not without one remembrance of me, father.”

“ Remembrance ! ” he said, with a wan smile. “ Do I need any ? Well, give me something then ; anything you have worn and cared for.”

She hastily undid a little cross which hung round her neck, and put it into his hand.

“ That ! ” he said, hesitating and surprised. “ Well, why not ? Farewell, my little girl. I think you will not forget me.”

“ Forget you ! ”

But he was gone, lost in the night, and her eyes could not follow him.

Espérance stood long with her hands crossed on her breast, unconscious of the lateness of the hour, of the gathering clouds, praying for Vaudès. He had taken

her little cross
for him. That
Adrien was to
enter the house
slender fingers
She knew well
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